

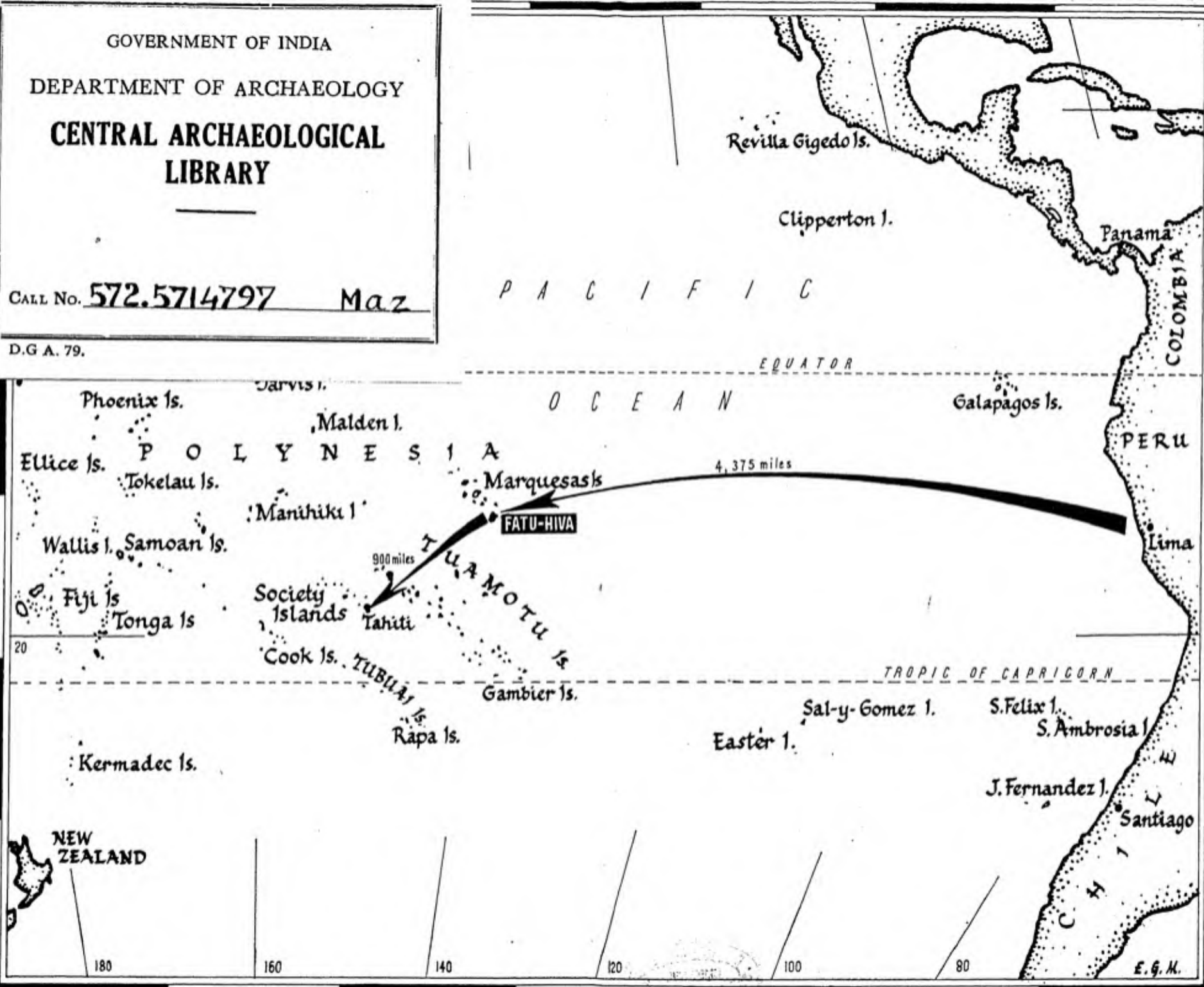
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY

CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
LIBRARY

CALL No. 572.5714797 Maz

D.G.A. 79.





IN SEARCH OF TIKI





# IN SEARCH OF TIKI

by

FRANCIS MAZIÈRE

SOUVENIR PRESS LONDON

1959

© 1959. Francis Mazière

Translated by Mervyn Savill

First published in French as *Archipel du Tiki* by Editions Robert Laffont

First published in English in 1959 by Souvenir Press Ltd., 94 Charlotte Street, W.1. and simultaneously in Canada by Ryerson Press, Toronto 2

*No part may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publishers except by a reviewer who wishes to quote brief passages for the purposes of a review*

**CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
LIBRARY, NEW DELHI.**

Acc. No. .... 16750 .....

Date. .... 31/7/59 .....

Call No. .... 572-5714797/Maz. ....

Set in 11 pt. Plantin 2 pt. leaded and printed  
in Great Britain at The Central Press, Aberdeen

# Contents

<i>Chap.</i>		<i>Page</i>
1	In Pursuit of the Setting Sun	11
2	Gods with Guns	17
3	The Devil's Archipelago	25
4	The Isle of Legends	33
5	The Storyteller	43
6	Forbidden Music	51
7	The Forgotten Tomb	58
8	The Love Legend of Tohuia	67
9	The Island that Died	72
10	The Faith of the Tiki	81
11	The Legend of the Forbidden Valleys	91
12	The Valley of Death	103
13	Cannibalism and Torture	114
14	The Village of Ghosts	122
15	To the Pass of Desire	131
16	The Last Queen and a Warning	135
17	Where Children Rule	144
18	The World's Oldest Migrations	150
19	Seven Valleys to Ouia	163
20	The Forest of Harps	174
21	Farewell	182

Read from original MS. & copy by Co. N. Belli March 17/19 (2. Sh. 21/-)



## *Illustrations*

### *Between pp. 16 and 17*

The "paradise" of many South Seas stories: a typical cove, drenched in lazy sunshine, of the Polynesian islands, thousands of miles out in the Pacific between Australasia and South America.

Something of the free, unworried life of the old days on the islands still remains, although it is steadily eroding.

The simplicity and grace of this shark in stone have a startling affinity with the decorations of modern industrial society.

Plaited leaves form the protection to homes, like this one standing at the water's edge in easy reach of the staple food.

An ironwood club, bearing an appropriately fierce expression.

A characteristic gesture of a dance which has its origins in unknown reaches of history. Note the seriousness of the performers as they execute their complicated mimes, and their tapa dresses.

### *Between pp. 48 and 49*

Are there anywhere in the world women more beautiful, lissom and natural in their bearing?

We have much to learn from the Polynesians in the matter of posture; upright, yet completely relaxed and unstrained.

Searching the sea-shore for marine creatures and brilliantly coloured shells is a favourite and very pleasant pastime.

Sheltered inlets provide perfect bathing for islanders who are as much at home in the water as they are on land.

When you are hungry, you work. And work means fishing—from an abundant sea.

Most of the creatures are old friends, yet some of them are always good for a laugh.

### *Between pp. 80 and 81*

The many carvings and engravings of fish reflect the islanders' complete dependence on the sea. Its changing moods are known like those of an old friend whose idiosyncrasies command a very healthy respect.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

A stone polisher, typical of many in constant use.

The carefully designed markings of the last tattooed man of the islands.

In statues, on walls, in partially completed carvings from rock, again and again we come across Long Ears.

Great store was placed on fertility symbols such as these, male and female.

A votive statue of the Goddess Nere on Hivaoa, an island of the Marquesas.

### *Between pp. 112 and 113*

This strange object, at first glance like an enormous spanner, is a stone guillotine.

Here is a head in position. It was cut off either with an axe or a sharpened bamboo sword.

The astonishing giant Tiki heads.

A grey lava Tiki. One can only be spellbound at the purity of this statue from the other end of the world. It might have been carved at the foot of the Nile obelisks.

A graveyard of human sacrifices within a huge banyan.

Coffin-canoes in their burial place in the cliffs, invariably well hidden and almost inaccessible. In the top right-hand corner of the picture is a skull wrapped in tapa.

### *Between pp. 144 and 145*

The system of whippings on a Polynesian canoe.

A wonderfully ornamented wooden koka, three-foot-six in diameter.

A basalt pestle for making poi-poi.

Another pestle, with no mistaking its origin.

Come across suddenly, Tiki heads have a decidedly macabre quality.

This diadem of whale teeth is adorned with human hair.

One wonders what secrets have lain with them all these years, what heritage of island lore and strains from far-off races.

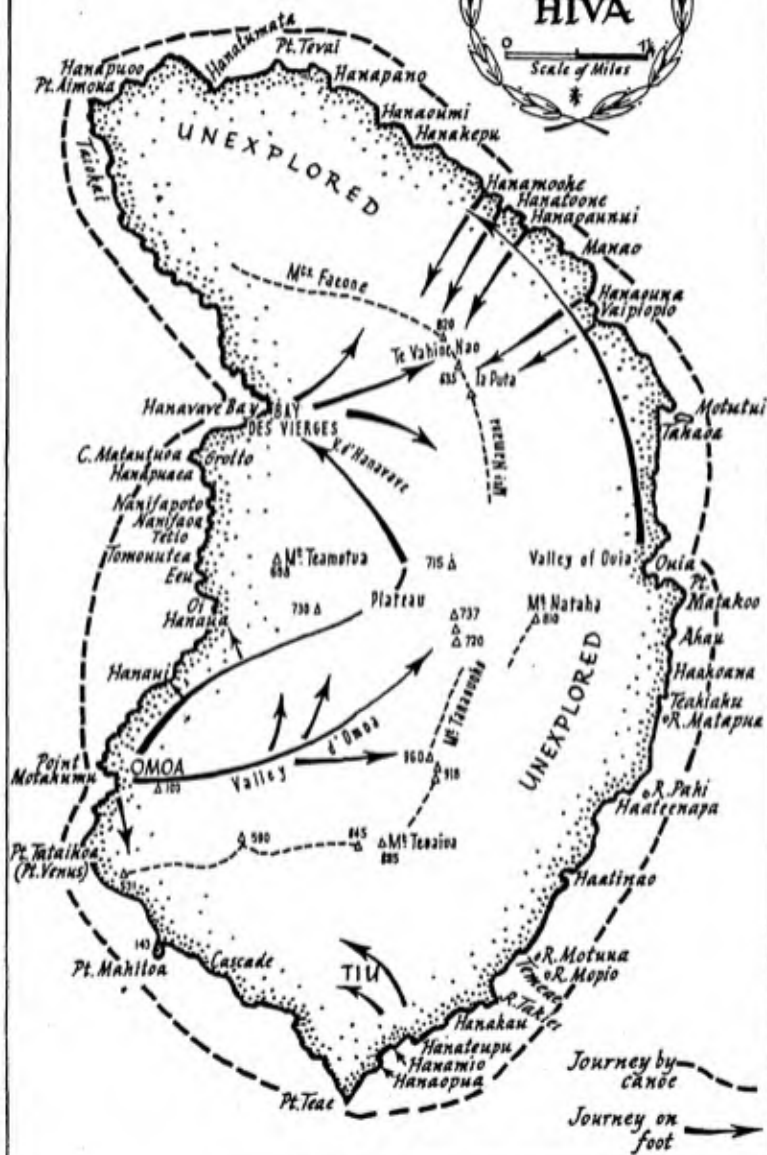
### DIAGRAMS

p. 121 A tortoiseshell ornament. They were applied to a mother of pearl ensemble and sewn on the fillet of the paekea.

p. 161 Tortoiseshell engraved with a shark's tooth, representing one of the seven phases of the creation of the universe by Tiki (one of the seven plaques of the paekea).

FATU-HIVA

Scale of Miles







## CHAPTER I

### *In Pursuit of the Setting Sun*

IT was an Amazonian Indian who sowed the seed in my mind when we were in camp at the foot of Tumac-Humac in South America. He had been trying to explain the origins of his people and said, "We came by sea but others continued their journey across the sea in pursuit of the sun." The words lingered in my memory and I knew, even then, that I too would one day cross the sea in pursuit of the setting sun.

At the time I was almost alone in thinking that the Islands of Eastern Polynesia had been peopled by men who had followed the sun into the West long before the Columbians. What helped to confirm my theory was the voyage by the Kon-Tiki team, for they blazed anew the trail to prove that such a fantastic journey was something more than a legend.

In the silence of the Pacific, more than 4,000 miles beyond the American seaboard, are the Polynesian Islands. Among them are the Marquesas, or more popularly, the Tiki Archipelago. Over 2,000 years ago they were known by the men of Tiki as *Te Fenua Enata*, the Land of Men.

They had visualised them as "the isles where the sun never dies," the reward held out by the priests of the sun as they preached from the top of their pyramids. Putting out to sea on balsa rafts the seekers drifted westwards until, after 150 or 200 days, exhausted and starving, they finally reached the islands of their dreams.

There, until the beginning of the nineteenth century, these ancient peoples preserved their secrets, and my ambition was

to study them and, if possible, to share the secrets behind their love of isolation, if they would allow me.

I sailed from Marseilles in September 1955, in the French ship which, on the Australian run to Sydney, supplies these French possessions in the Pacific with officials. The passengers are worthy folk, not particularly well acquainted with the map of their homeland, but who know down to the last detail the advantage of life in the Colonies.

To reach the islands of dreams meant a month at sea with a school of mediocrity and the most outrageous vulgarity and, listening to my fellow travellers' opinions of coloured people, I found it difficult to understand how natives could have respected us for so long and continued to call themselves French. Around me was a small society of gendarmes, priests, stool-pigeons, and the petty panjumdrams who go there to rule, to teach liberty, equality and fraternity to a people who from exquisite innate courtesy weave garlands of flowers to welcome even the stranger.

Algiers, Madeira, Guadelupe, Martinique, Curaçao and then Panama.

Panama is one of the most exciting spots in the world: a narrow passage which opens the door to escape—the Canal is a blade which gleams through the marshy mists—leading to the Pacific beyond.

Panama, city of the conquistadors, is the advance post to the Pacific, where in the shadow of modern skyscrapers, Old Panama is dying among its own ruins. Cortez' soldiers, after murdering the Indios, built here a fabulous city in which all the wealth pillaged from the Inca cities accumulated until the day the British Morgan, a nationalist corsair, captured, sacked and burned the town.

\*            \*            \*

We glided out of the funnel-shaped mouth of the Canal towards the open sea. We passed the Pearl Islands, still inhabited by a few refugee Indians, and 4,500 miles of the

Pacific lay ahead. We forged slowly through dark mist which collects in these waters—the “inky black cauldron” which terrified the early navigators. The sea was the colour of oil under a leaden sky. But soon we emerged into the open sea and I was enchanted by the successive dawns which grew more and more beautiful. But none rivalled in splendour the dawn that rose after ten days at sea as we approached the Tuamotu archipelago, the chain of islands that lies across the seaways to Tahiti.

I was roused by a Tahiti girl. “Day is breaking. Come and see Puka Puka, the first atoll . . .” It was an unforgettable sight. Orange in the sun, glittering with spray, the first coconut palms emerged, making the atoll resemble a coronet of ferns set in the ocean. It was a striking, almost physical impression. “*Terra!*” the men in the first galleons used to cry. *Te fenua enata*, the land of men!

The Tuamotu islands are a host of stars, pinned forever on the waves, diadems of reefs encircling the calm and beauty of the lagoons. On the periphery of the atolls the waves break, hurling their spray to the tops of the palm trees. Each lagoon is a most beautiful marine garden with blossoms of coral, fishes and multi-coloured seaweed. It is here that the first who came found their food, their knowledge of another world, their happiness . . .

The word lagoon now means to me a breath-taking vision of colour. Each, impossible to describe, casts its fabulous and beautiful reflection up to the clouds and from afar it is the colouring of the clouds that discovers the islands. They are tinged with purple, emerald, saffron and opal—exquisite mirrors reflecting all the colours of a dream. For those who first migrated westwards it must have seemed the ultimate reward.

In the distance lay Mourea in all its splendour on the horizon. It protects Tahiti and breaks the ocean swell. And then, Tahiti itself . . . in the dawn, in all its dazzling beauty. The

scent of its flowers was wafted to us over the reef. Its crowns of clouds concealed the heights where the last great chiefs are buried. Papeete, the port for Tahiti and port of the South Seas, is the goal of ocean-going sailing ships and its forest of masts and yards are a screen to hide the hideous face which white civilisation has implanted on it. Although covered with greenery, the barracks and the corrugated iron huts are an indictment of the mediocrity, the bad taste, and the pretentiousness of our Empire builders.

On catching sight of this panorama of an already rusty modernity, one can imagine the disillusion of that great Frenchman who disembarked in Oceania more than fifty years ago. I am referring, of course, to Paul Gauguin who was one of the first to perceive that here was an appalling revelation of a dying world.

I quote Victor Segalen: "These first days he (Gauguin) was able to witness, in a ridiculous setting, an event of which perhaps he alone, an initiate on his arrival, could understand the pathetic enormity. The obsequies of Pomare V, the last king of Tahiti, were being celebrated. There were no human sacrifices to honour this powerful corpse. He was being dispatched to a reformist heaven. With this king disappeared the last vestiges in thrall to our Republic of what had once been a dynasty, a State, and a rite. Gauguin was profoundly moved."

More than fifty years later I could only confirm with bitterness the terrible results of our so-called civilising efforts. But beauty remains. Tahiti is the image of paradise. I received the welcoming garland of flowers.

Everyone has tried to describe Tahiti, which has preserved the secret of its life. Many also, with no understanding of the natives, have passed definite judgments upon them, but Tahiti is still unique.

There followed for me a few days of sheer delight. With my island friends I visited the valleys, climbed over waterfalls,

marched by night through dewy ferns and swam by day among the bright coral. In this way Tahiti becomes inviolable in your heart, like a first love. The reverse side of the medal came when I had to take a few official steps to be allowed the right to work in peace!

It was the beginning of October and my goal was Fatu Hiva, the southernmost and largest island of the Marquesas group, 600 miles north-east of Tahiti. I wanted to explore this island whose east coast no white man had ever before visited—the forbidden coast where the first men who arrived from America are buried.

The Tiki archipelago is in touch with Tahiti once a month by schooner, one of the last big sailing vessels of the islands. Our ship was the *Vaitere*, a two-masted cutter built on the model of the earliest schooners. Magnificently designed for the open sea and coming alongside in the dangerous bays under full press of sail, she is an ideal ship. I could not have wished for one more evocative of adventure among the islands. With full holds, the deck itself was soon cluttered with crates, sacks, pigs, chickens and horses, all sharing the available space with the passengers. A single boat once a month to supply a whole group of islands never has enough room to stow everything. It adds to the charm of these vessels.

"Monsieur Mazière, I am Te Pu Tahiti, captain of the *Vaitere*. We are just sailing." Te Pu Tahiti, "The head of Tahiti" and name possessing nobility, like all Polynesian names.

Te Pu Tahiti still navigates by the stars and the voyage, though scheduled to last fifteen days, might have lasted weeks. But, looking at the crew, entirely Marquesans, a race of magnificent manhood, I felt I could face any danger.

Slowly the *Vaitere* pulled away from the quayside, letting off three blasts of her siren in farewell, and soon the great swell of the Pacific took hold of her for the journey which in

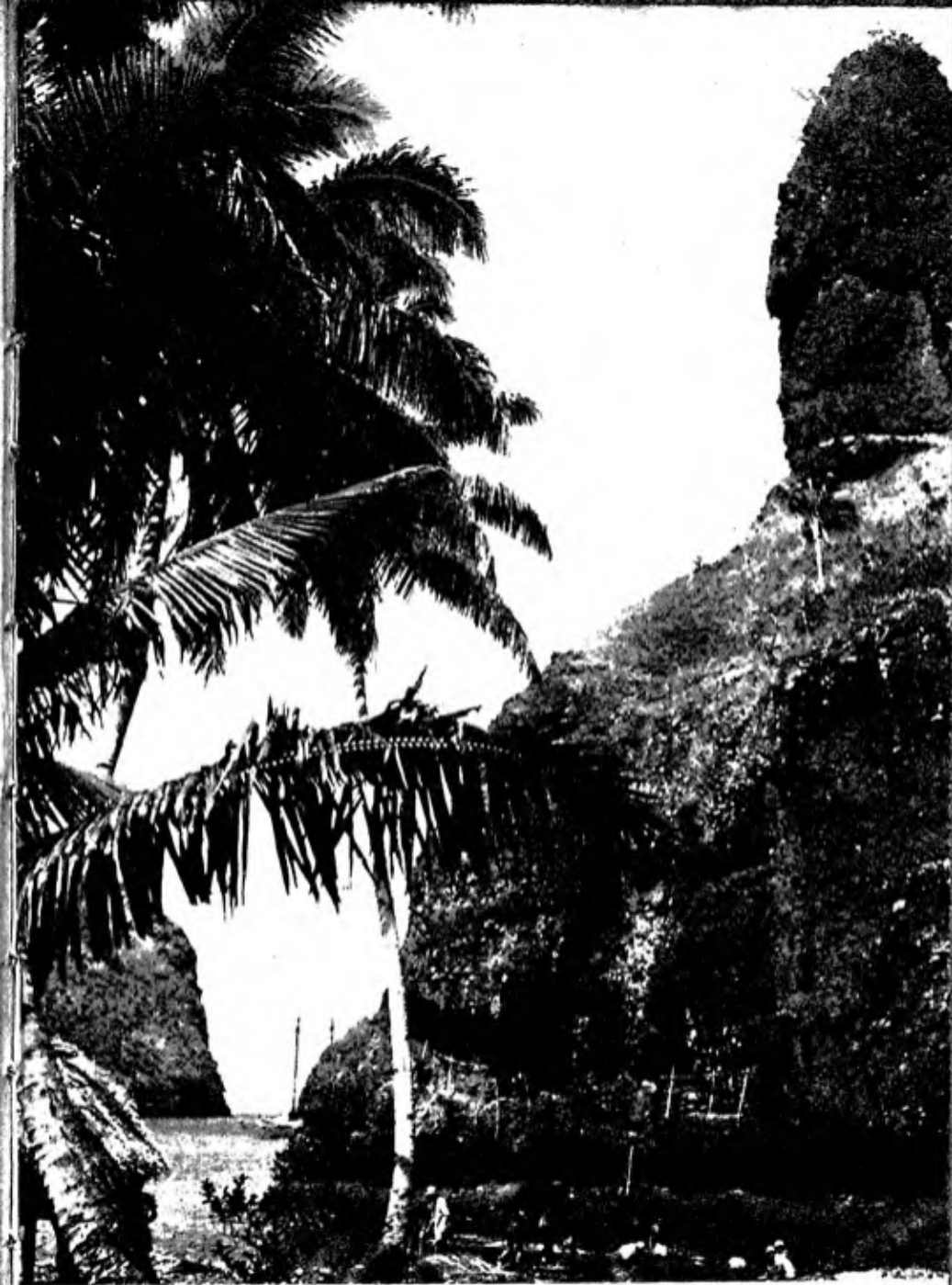
## IN SEARCH OF TIKI

olden days was undertaken in huge canoes festooned with white pennants.

Night enlarged the horizon into "a sombre canvas festooned with stars," as Gauguin described it. Then, squatting on the upper deck, we listened to the songs of the sailors and Te Pu Tahiti spoke to me of the islands I had yearned to visit since that night when the Amazonian Indian had first told me of his people.

Before the first white man arrived in these fabulous islands nearly five centuries ago, their population was 100,000. In 1956 it was 3,600.

The Marquesas . . . the very name the white men gave them is an insult! I shall show why.



The "paradise" of many South Seas stories: a typical cove, drenched in lazy sunshine, of the Polynesian islands, thousands of miles out in the Pacific between Australasia and South America



Something of the free, unworried life of the old days on the islands still remains, although it is steadily eroding

The simplicity and grace of this shark in stone have a startling affinity with the decorations of modern industrial society







Plaited leaves form the protection to homes, like this one standing at the water's edge in easy reach of the staple food

An ironwood club, bearing an appropriately fierce expression





A characteristic gesture of a dance which has its origins in unknown reaches of history. Note the seriousness of the performers as they execute their complicated mimes, and their tapa dresses

## CHAPTER 2

### *Gods with Guns*

ON the 9th April, 1595, Alvaro Mendana de Ueira received from Don Garcia Hurtado de Mendoza, Viceroy of Peru, in the name of his Catholic Majesty, the order to set out on a voyage of discovery of new lands where the pillage and slaughter of the Inca Empire could be repeated with advantage.

The Spaniards advanced across the Pacific with the *San Hieronimo*, the *Almirante*, the *Santa Isabella*, the *San Felipe* and the frigate *Santa Catalina*. These vessels with the charming names arrived off the beautiful and happy island of Fatu Hiva, moored in Omoa Bay, and shortly dealt out death.

The natives, in their amazement, took the ships for floating islands. Four hundred men in seventy canoes, others on rafts or swimming, put out to greet the fleet. On seeing white men they thought at first it was the return of their ancestors which an age-old tradition had promised. For the Tiki people white was the colour of God and Peace. On the invitation of the Spanish crew, forty men were chosen to come aboard with their gifts: coconuts, bananas, pawpaws, pigs. . . .

The crews could not make themselves understood. The natives just squatted, staring in amazement. Exchange of gifts being a Polynesian custom, it is possible there may have been what might have seemed petty thieving. An angry order was given and a salvo of shots fired—the first firearms the islanders had ever seen or heard. It was a signal that they must leave. They did not move. The Spanish sailors tried to fling an old man into the water. When he caught hold of the rigging they

cut off his hands with a sabre. It was the general signal for a battle. The Marquesans, with great courage, tried to take the ships in tow. The Spanish muskets gave them Christian civilisation's baptism of fire. So death came.

After this exploit Mendana, having consulted his calendar, baptised the land he had discovered Santa Magdalena. The admiral was about to sail away when three men in a canoe, brandishing a green branch and a piece of white cloth, came to sue for peace.

The narrator of the expedition had been observant. He described the people thus: "They were tall, well-built men with admirable teeth and mouths; the women had beautiful, frail hands and wore their hair loose over their shoulders. They were as beautiful as the women of Lima, just as white-skinned, *and they had the same manner of speech.*" This last phrase is very important for it is the first irrefutable testimony to the origin of the Polynesian races.

Other islands were discovered. At Santa Christina, in a bay named Madre de Dios, a demarkation line was traced on the shore. Only women were allowed to cross. And so syphilis came to the islands.

After one massacre Mendana ordered a great Mass to be celebrated. He went ashore with his wife, Dona Isabella Belleto, and the passengers. The islanders imitated the devotions and knelt. They would have been surprised had they known the significance of this strange practice. On another occasion, after more killings, the terrified natives fled into the valleys which soon echoed with the dirges as the Tiki people mourned their dead. The islands were baptised *Islas Marquesas de Mendoza*, in honour of the wife of the Viceroy of Peru. The name is an insult. Nevertheless it is preserved even today by the French who annexed this territory.

Thus began the history of the slow death of the Tiki archipelago. The world forgot the Marquesas for nearly two hundred years, but the people never forgot their first contact with

the white man. When Captain Cook landed in Madre de Dios in 1674 he was surprised by their distrust. The women fled; they remembered disease. The natives offered pepper plants, the symbol of peace, and ventured aboard. But their canoes were loaded with stones for the slings they carried.

Dolphins played ahead of our ship in the surf, as though intent upon directing our bows towards the Takapoto atoll. The atoll is a bright realm isolated in time and space, separated from the throbbing turmoil of our world. The men of the atolls have thus preserved their vision of life. A diadem of coral raised a few feet above sea level encircles the liquid garden of the lagoon and also its inhabitants, bringing them a calm and lucid life. To them life means fishing, picking coconuts, raising a few small black pigs and for a few months of the year diving for mother of pearl to depths of more than thirty fathoms.

Here man has learned how to balance his life; reserving a great part of it to peaceful activities, to dreams which do not make him shirk the danger of fighting sharks, wrestling against the sea and sometimes dying at an early age on some rash adventure. He knows that he can dive to the greatest depths exceeding the limits of his resistance. He knows too that occasionally the heart resists. . . . One evening no different from the rest, as the sun sets in a dying blaze, the canoes return in file, leaving to the lagoon the last glances of a diver who could not come back. This presence of death gives the Tuamotus their passionate love of life. To live is to dance, to sing, to spend all the money you earn from the mother of pearl without counting it. It is to savour the passing moment.

We entered the straits of Takaroa, a difficult channel where the current reaches six knots at ebb tide. We had to wait for high tide to cross the atoll into the lagoon. Apart from the laughter of the women who came to greet the ship, no sound broke the immense silence of the reef. Motionless as a lake of

quicksilver, marked at times by the flight of flying fish chased by sharks, the lagoon reflected the silent flight of the terns. The little village stood on the inner shore in all its glory—dolls' houses painted in bright colours to make up for the lack of flowers which grow with difficulty in these parts.

Like all Polynesians the Tuamotus have perfect taste. Outside their houses the women string the most beautiful necklaces in the world of shells from the lagoon. Others weave hats of banana fibre or pandanus. The old Mama Ruau patiently sew their tifaifai. (The word means to cut out.) As our grandmothers used to do, they collect little pieces of material and make magnificently coloured patchwork coverlets. Thus in the village life continues at its sunny rhythm. The coconut palms cast their star-shaped shadows, while between their slender trunks as far as the eye can see stretch the changing colours of the sea. The schooner discharged a never-ending flood of crates of corned beef, beer, chewing gum, Eau de Cologne and rolls of pareo. The Tuamotus in exchange sold their copra and mother of pearl. Trade was brisk and gay among the barter of produce from the other islands.

We called at Takaroa-Takapoto, outpost of the Marquesas. The names come from the language of the Tiki and the men of these Eastern islands originate from the same race. Their legends recall their westward migration from the Tuamotus islands as the result of wars. At ebb tide the schooner left the wharf. She was carried away by the violent current which flings itself like a stream into the heavy swell. "Full speed ahead!"

We crossed the reef at night. The hosts of stars are all known to the Polynesians to whom the sky is a chart where all the roads cross and lead to the islands.

The islands . . .

In 1791, Ingram from Boston discovered the islands of Ua-Pu, Nuku-Hiva, and Ua-Uka. Etienne Marchand from Marseilles took possession of Ua-Pu and Nuku-Hiva in the

name of the King of France and soon more ships came. They were invariably surrounded by hosts of naiads for the women were not allowed to board a canoe. And so prostitution came. The arrival of the first whalers continued the ruin. There were orgies on board after which the sailors threw the girls into the sea. Venereal diseases, prostitution, alcohol arrived and two deserters from an American whaler taught the natives how to distil coconut milk.

To replace the deserters, the whaler captain lured islanders aboard and then immediately set sail. The strongest were kept, the weak thrown overboard. Thus the whole history of the white men's presence in the Tiki archipelago is one long series of abuses of confidence, and at this point the reader who believes in the superiority of the white man can quite safely close this book.

On the 5th June, 1791, the *Duff*, chartered by the Evangelical Missionary Society of London and under the command of Wilson, put in at Vaitahua. The boat was immediately surrounded by vahines as naked as Eve, but they were not allowed on board. The chief Tenai then arrived after asking the missionaries "to put their guns to sleep." His daughter was allowed to accompany him—a pretty young girl, with her yellow skin and cheeks bright from the violent exercise, and the symmetry of her limbs and the beauty of her body a magnificent model for any sculptor or painter. Her sole garment was a simple girdle of leaves which the goats on board immediately proceeded to ransack. Seeing this, the missionaries rushed forward to hide her from lecherous eyes.

The object of the mission being communicated to Tenai, he immediately agreed to receive two missionaries. According to Wilson: "The sound of a bell surprised him very much. It was sad to see a man possessing all the dignity of a chief and a father, disturbed by a noise so little worthy of attention. This low intelligence was deplorable . . ." This remark indicates



the degree of discernment and above all the arrogance of visitors, so convinced of their own superiority.

But Vincendon Dumoulin, naval hydrographer attached to the Dupetit-Thouars expedition, in 1843, wrote: "To see the way in which today they exploit the races conquered by their words, one is tempted to believe that they have not entirely forgotten the material interests of this world when they preach to these unfortunate savages the punishments and rewards promised in the next world."

I cannot refrain from closing the story of this charming attempt at evangelisation by quoting the strange adventure which befell the missionary Harris who came to Vaitahu in the *Duff*.

Harris, already ill-disposed towards the inhabitants of Tahuata, refused to accompany his colleague Crook on an excursion through the neighbouring valley, conducted by their host the chief Tenai. This benevolent chief, who had already shared his dwelling with the two missionaries, did not confine his hospitality to this friendly demonstration. He wanted to confer upon Harris, during his absence, his own prerogatives in all respects and, to use the expression of Krusenstern, "he delegated to him the task of lighting the royal fires." He was to replace advantageously some favourite husband absent for the night. But the missionary, already depressed by the sombre prospect of a prolonged stay among the savages, had not even understood the significance of what had been said to him; he entirely neglected his friend's family and the functions which had been imposed upon him.

Hoping in sleep to allay his anxiety, he retired to bed early. The chief's wife, surprised at this behaviour, perhaps fearing the reproaches of her husband and, moreover, moved by the desire to see a European at close quarters, took advantage of the sleeping man to examine him at her leisure with all the remaining wives. But their curiosity was not confined to a silent inspection. All these women wanted to touch him and



the imprudent contact of their hands awoke the unfortunate Harris with a start, making him think that his life was in danger. He seized the bag containing his belongings and made off at full speed for the shore, where he arrived in the middle of the night. Unfortunately the *Duff* was anchored a long way from the land. The missionary called for help with all his might. A few savages attracted by his cries came up and tried to rob him. Terrified, he ran off half-demented into the forest and wandered about in terror until morning. Falconer, an officer of the *Duff*, sent to find him, could not land because of the violent bore that day. And so, crowning his misfortunes, Harris was hauled aboard on a rope through the breakers.

The modern history of the Tiki archipelago begins from this time. Religion, disease and alcohol were to stifle and murder this noble race. It only needed the whalers to perpetuate the massacre. In 1804, Krusenstern the navigator; in 1813 the American Commodore Porter, who remained for more than a year at Nuku-Hiva; in 1815 the *Matilda* under Captain Fowler; in 1818 the *Bordelais*, under Roquefeuille; in 1825 the *Dolphin* under Pouldind . . . In 1827 two evangelical ministers landed at Vaitahu but had to re-embark to avoid being put to sacrifice. In 1829 the American ship *Vincennes* tried to make good the disasters by banning alcohol and enforcing morals. In the same year came five missionaries from London. They made no converts but had great difficulty in protecting their wives . . . They finally took one Temoana to London where they exhibited him for twopence a peep to swell the coffers of the Mission Society.

On 8th April, 1838, two French Catholic missionaries were landed at Tahuata and a few days later the French warship *Astrolabe* and another anchored in the bay at Nuku-Hiva. Every evening the *Astrolabe* fired her guns. This signal started the race of the naiads towards the ships where they spent the night.

French missionaries were landed on the different islands and, aided by the French Government, prepared for the annexation. In 1842 the French Admiral Dupetit-Thouars pronounced this phrase which would have been by no means incongruous in the mouth of the meanest grocer: "By creating needs in them we shall make ourselves indispensable." Under this symbol these gentlemen proceeded to destroy the life and history of the Tiki archipelago. On the 30th March, 1863, Monseigneur Dordillon was appointed Minister for Native Affairs. He immediately promulgated the following decrees: "Indissolubility of marriage; obligation to send children to the mission school; a ban on beating the drum in the pagan manner, singing pagan or indecent songs, anointing themselves with *eka* or *pani*; wearing necklaces of pandanus fruits and scented costumes, tattooing or allowing themselves to be tattooed, and on walking about or bathing naked." All the pagan shrines were desecrated. The islanders were forbidden to work on Sunday or feast days.

The men of Tiki were about to learn how to become civilised!

The *Vaitere* put up hosts of flying fish which sped like silver darts over the swell. We were approaching the islands. Before dawn we should be in sight of Nuku-Hiva, first landmark of the archipelago—the "Devil's Archipelago."

"In a few days we shall anchor at Fatu Hiva," said Te Pu Tahiti. "Behave decently and you will succeed . . ."

I could sense a great bitterness in his words.

### CHAPTER 3

## *The Devil's Archipelago*

"LAND ahoy!" cried the topman.

Even before the islands appear you see their clouds, huge masses of cumulus, tinged scarlet by the dawn sun, changing imperceptibly from violet to purple . . . Then suddenly the islands were rising out of the sea. Huge and overpowering, the single pile of lava of Nuku-Hiva soars upwards. Needles of trachyte pointed like daggers at the hearts of the clouds. By its great cliff the squalls lashed the swell into geysers which joined the short-lived rainbows.

The *Vaitere* advanced, surrounded by the sharks which teem along these coasts. One is nonplussed by the sight of the islands where from the sea it seems impossible for anyone to have lived. Towering two thousand feet and more above the sea, their sheer cliffs of black and violet lava meet the waves with the same volcanic violence which once created the very islands themselves. The first sight of this spectacle of nature is indeed awe-inspiring. It stirs up impressions of infinite sadness and casts a spell from which one is never again entirely free. Never, not even in the heart of the Amazon, had I ever felt such a sense of isolation in time and distance. It was no wonder that a navigator of the past, on first seeing this fantastic region from the sea, called it "The Devil's Archipelago."

Each island is an extinct crater and here it was that the Tiki people centuries ago evolved their civilisation. The lava cliffs open into narrow passages into which the sun plunges.

Silvery waterfalls are veiled behind bright rainbows, everlasting dewdrops sparkle on the vegetation. The gorges crumble, the sun bathes the enclosed beaches, the native huts shelter among corridors of coconut palms.

We were gazing through a split cliff into the coffin-like bay of Hakau, its spectacular waterfall crashing down more than 2,000 feet. It was a deserted valley ringed by a crater of violet lava, dotted with red and orange concretions. A huge canoe sixty-six feet long still remains there, testimony to the hasty migrations of the men of the Tiki on their journeys to the west.

"Hard to port!" The *Vaitere* now glided into the bay of Taiohae guarded by two immense rocky needles. The shock of the waves beating on the rocks has hollowed out a host of caves, once burial places for the Tiki women. Now ransacked, they overlook the bay like huge hollow eyes, the eyes of a skull.

Undermined by the waves, the foot of the cliff is pierced by blow holes through which the sea spouts. These are the famous "marine trumpets." A dull intermittent noise, volcanic in its sound, comes first. Then the blow holes whistle the song of the Pacific.

The French Resident was leaving next day for the island of Ua-Uka and I accepted with great pleasure his invitation to join him. At six in the morning—the men of the islands say "the sun launches its rays"—we met on the little wharf and embarked in a lighter. We hugged the shore under the cliffs and admired the splendour of the scenery.

The lava, cooling on abrupt contact with the sea, has produced basalt prisms to which the coral has attached itself, forming submarine caverns and blowholes. We soon rounded an enormous cliff in the shape of a cross barred with two immense white trachyte faults about six feet wide. The whole island group is full of natural phenomena of the greatest interest; towers, steeples, needles, crevasses into which the sea floods,

## THE DEVIL'S ARCHIPELAGO

cascades which the wind vapourises into moving rainbows, spurs of congealed lava towering above the geysers. Wild goats, little white dots on the violet cliff, leaped from one escarpment to the other. At the foot of the reefs the sharks prowled, waiting for a goat to fall.

We entered the famous Bay of Taipivai to find the South Seas landscape of one's dreams. Sheltered, cooled by the trade winds, the mirror of the bay is surrounded by motionless palms. The sea comes to rest by a sandy ridge down by the river, thus creating a large pocket of limpid, fresh water. Men and horses come at nightfall in search of coolness and relaxation.

The Bay of Taipivai, a South Sea island dream, a paradise and a sanctuary . . . In the old days at nightfall the big drum resounded through the luxuriant valley to call the tattooed warriors, with their rings of hair and tortoiseshell crowns, their carved clubs and headdresses of wild cock's feathers, to hear the recital of the genealogy of the Tiki.

We plunged our bows through the great swell. We passed an islet, a little plaque of coral, with Ua-Uka opposite. Thousands of kavakos screamed with anger and literally blackened the sky as the captain gave a blast on the siren. The birds stormed round, cursing us, diving on us, pulling out a few inches above our heads and covering us with droppings, in their defiance of our disturbance. On the islet thousands of eggs were being hatched in the sun and the baby kavakos were making their first attempts to fly. Dolphins and giant rays, some more than thirty feet across, brushed the sides of our ship, lashing up the swell with their enormous fins.

The cliffs of Ua-Uka were terraces of lava and coral. Through a break in the cliffs, a long dog-legged corridor led to the spacious bay of Vaipae, with its beach of black sand dotted with emerald green palm trees. I could see a few coffins hoisted high among the jagged crags. Once the cliff was studded with them, but the great tidal wave of 1906,

which submerged the Tuamotos, also swamped these cliffs and carried away most of the canoe coffins and their treasures.

Our siren had been heard and on the beach five horsemen in scarlet pareos galloped towards us, making a Gauguin picture as the foam-flecked horses with flowing manes raised the iridescent black sand on the sea's edge. We stood on the bridge spellbound by this magnificent sight. The wild beauty of the Tiki archipelago is visible here in all its splendour, as is the image of a free people—*Te Fenua Enata*, the Land of Men.

We were welcomed by the chieftain with all the courtesy of Polynesian hospitality, hospitality which makes him give everything to the stranger, and two boys agreed to accompany me next day on a trip across the island.

Horses are ridden bareback or with a wooden saddle of the gaucho type. No stirrups, no bit, simply a snaffle passed through the horse's mouth. It is an exciting sport to ride them for they are used to the cliffs and the wild trails through the plateau of ferns. Originally imported by the French, they became acclimatised and ultimately produced a race suited to the country. They are little, stocky, well-bred, remarkable climbers, sure-footed and speedy.

All paths skirt the abysses, with sheer drops to the valley below, and most of the accidents are caused by wasps which are very common in the islands. Their stings madden the horses which gallop off out of control.

High on the plateau we spotted a herd of about forty wild horses with stone-coloured coats and manes flying in the wind. A round-up. We charged with a shout. The horses neighed and we galloped, swinging the ropes over our heads and yelling like maniacs. The herd took to flight and then the chase began to the edge of a crest. The beasts wheeled round, reared, neighed and charged us. It was a wild melee and we shouted with delight. Altogether the chase continued for more than an hour. It was wonderful!

Finally we rested. All around and below stretched the Pacific and the islands. We could hear the far-off cries from the islet of the birds. "*Me kanahau!*" said the boy beside me. Yes, it was very beautiful, perhaps too beautiful . . .

We rode slowly on, allowing the horses to bite off wild white guava fruit to quench their thirst. We reached the summit of the plateau which ends in a razor-edged crest covered with iron wood, the singing tree. This is a type of conifer with willowy branches in which the wind plays, like an Aeolian harp, making the forest sing. In the old days the noise was sacred throughout the islands, being one of the three types of music which the men listened to in silence—the song of Tahua, the noise of the reef and the lament of the iron wood trees.

We climbed to the crest to look at an enormous *marae* submerged by the ferns: a place of prayer, worship and sometimes of sacrifice, where the men of Tiki had erected a sun temple and sanctuary, built of huge blocks of red and black stone. From here the Tahuas could follow the course of the sun, seeing it born and die in the same dazzling splendour. It is a most impressive spot and I could see in my mind's eye the slow procession draped in white tapa climbing the sun path to the rhythm of the drums.

Gone for ever is that dull throb of the tom-toms which echoed through the valleys, assembling the people. Even today its absence is felt as a terrible deprivation. What do these people do now that they are "civilised"? They drink beer, read their missals upside down, and kill time!

Thrusting aside the shrouds of ferns I found the first evidence of what I had travelled so far to discover. I saw the steps leading to the chief's stone, and the enormous deep holes where the popoi—the ancient food of the islands—could be left for ten, twenty and even thirty years and still be edible. My knowledge was now to increase daily.

In the forest we came upon eerie pyramids of tohua stones marking the burial place of women who had died in childbirth.



All were enmeshed in the flourishing lianas which, in the passage of time, had gradually disintegrated the tombs so that skeletons, skulls and bones were everywhere, some of them high up entangled and threaded amid the climbing plants. It was a veritable realm of death that hovered above us in the forest. We also discovered an ancient Tohua, a vast open terrace and once the scene of feasts and tribal jousts.

We returned to the house flower-laden at the edge of the river and happy children were everywhere. Some were bathing, some playing with their little tame pigs. Toddlers were learning to walk, babies were crawling about on all fours in the grass, a little girl was weaving a garland of flowers. The chief ruled over this smiling happy world where the children were the little monarchs. *Wahina!* Red wine! We drank a glass to the Administrator who had finished his work and was ready to move on.

The *Vaitere* returned to pick us up the next day and we sailed for Tahuata, the Isle of Oranges, where the sands are white. It is an island that has had its share of adventures beginning with Admiral Abel Dupetit-Thouars who, on 1st May, 1942, took possession without any legal proceedings.

For this ceremony, he could think of nothing better than to give King Iotete a red plush Louis XVI costume with gold epaulettes. Fifteen days later the admiral took on board the king's heir presumptive as hostage and, after dispossessing the king, turned his guns on to the island which was reduced to silence.

Some of the subsequent adventurers were strange characters. There was the man known as Bill Wallis, said to be German, who settled in one of the valleys and presented the island with eighty children, most of whom were mad. Eventually, he dug his own grave and, before putting a musket ball through his head, explained, "It is impossible to live with eighty pairs of mad eyes constantly staring at you."

Just before the Second World War, there settled on the



## THE DEVIL'S ARCHIPELAGO

island a former gold prospector from the Klondyke, named Wilkinson, who planted a valley with coconuts and coffee and is said to have buried a sack of gold dust just before he died.

No settler was more unusual, however, than the French deserter, Joseph Cabri, who arrived in 1792. He shared the life of the natives, whom he terrified, and was tattooed all over. He admitted taking part in cannibal feasts but denied that he ever ate "long pig" himself.

After some years, a Russian warship put in at the island and Cabri was on board when it sailed. It was impossible to put him ashore and he was brought back to Europe where he was questioned by scientists, presented to several crowned heads and afterwards displayed himself in fairs until the time of his death.

Cabri was certainly the only white man who really knew the life and customs of the men of Tiki. He knew the last high priests, the custodians of the sacred language who held the clue to the secret hieroglyphics which served as a script. But it was symptomatic of the age that no-one troubled to learn from Cabri's mouth information of capital importance to the study of these regions.

Tahuata is one of the points of a triangle formed by Hiva-Oa and Motane. The schooner leaves Motane, a desert island, the island of sheep, to starboard and skirts Hiva-Oa, the fabulous island where Paul Gauguin chose to live his last years in his struggle against oppression. Those last years of his life as a painter, until his death by exhaustion, affirmed for posterity his supreme genius and integrity. It is here, in the valley of Atuana, valley of pagan gods, that Gauguin lies buried. It is a valley which to me seemed profaned by the rusty corrugated iron steeple of the Christian cathedral. It is here that My Lord Bishop of Cambyssopolis, Vicar apostolic of Eastern Oceania imposed his will and introduced into the archipelago his hawkers of paradise . . .

## IN SEARCH OF TIKI

Half a century after his death, despite the loathsome faking of his memory, the men of Tiki still speak of Gauguin. Men who do not even know the name of the new governor still respect the memory and the name of Gauguin.

## CHAPTER 4

### *The Isle of Legends*

MY first sight of Fatu Hiva, the isle of legends, my destination, was from the sea at dawn.

There was the island, in the brilliant sunshine, barricaded by its roaring breakers; there was the island where the God of the volcanoes once made the ocean burst into flame and set fire to the swell, creating life. *Tahi-Hoa!* cried the men of long ago from their rafts. *Fatu Hiva!* Consecrated by the high priests of the redeeming sun, it was the first haven of those who, dying of thirst but avid for the sun, still pursued its course to the West. Here, the balsa rafts were smashed on the reefs and men were delivered from the sea to become the captives of paradise.

To the first gaze of the traveller, Fatu Hiva resembles an enormous crater deposited in the sea by a cataclysm. The jaws of its fantastic crests serrate the clouds. Cliffs dominate the bays. One of these, Hanavave, the Bay of the Virgins, is one of the most beautiful in the world. For the men of the Tiki, it must have been the Valley of the Sun. The luminous water reflects the fabulous lava needles, veritable plutonian megaliths erected by nature to the glory of the sun. Today only two valleys are inhabited on Fatu Hiva: Henevave and Omoa. Our schooner came to rest in the Bay of Omoa, a vast beach of black sand edged with sea foam embroidery opened before us.

The French flag hung at the mast of a coconut palm; two canoes drew away from the shore and, leaping over the waves,

came alongside. The derricks creaked and the crew lowered our heavy whaler which would unload the cargo. It was fascinating to watch as the sailors, their naked torsos glistening with spray, seized the oars and pulled with all their might at a signal from the man at the tiller. Suddenly the oars paused and the whaler balanced on the wave awaiting the signal, and then the craft flew over the foaming crest until the coxswain, with a sharp pull on the rear oar, let the whaler beach on the sand.

I embarked on the fourth trip with all my precious material brought from Europe, weighing almost a ton. The whaler rose into the air and we were carried at a mad speed on the crest of the breaking wave to be flung on the sand.

Night fell. The navigation lights of the *Vaitere* twinkled above the waves. The captain and his crew were now with the chief who received them royally, as friends. It was a marvellous evening and gave me the necessary spur to face the task which would isolate me here for six months.

In the glorious dawn as the sky softened in the beauty of the heavenly fires, the trade wind stole through the sleeping valley, bearing with it the echo of the *Vaitere's* siren as she prepared to leave. On the beach horses galloped, sporting with the foam of the waves. The men were busy loading the whaler for the last outward crossing of the breakers. The *Vaitere* weighed anchor and set a southerly course until all that could be seen of her was the gentle metronome of her masts keeping time with the swell. We remained standing motionless on the beach for a long time. *Kaoha nui ! Farewell.*

The entire population had assembled, some 300 natives, and Willy Grelet, the chief, introduced me to everyone. They already knew from the *Vaitere's* sailors what I was going to do and how long I intended to remain with them . . . that I was to explore the sacred valleys containing their ancient tombs. Their faces were impassive, concealing their thoughts. I understood, for my skin being white, I represented for them

just another of the farani, of the popaa whose presence is only tolerated. I had no right to judge, only to keep silent, to learn to love them.

As I explained my needs Willy listened but suddenly interrupted me: "My house is yours. I simply ask you to give me your word to respect certain things—my house, the customs of our people and their families. If you are capable of doing that, and it will be a rare occurrence, the island will be all yours."

We set out. The road which climbed up from the shore to the valley was paved with enormous stones like a Roman way; flanked with flowers and capoc trees it separated the village into two long corridors, lined with cliffs. Everything was clean, decorated with flowers and gay pseudo-coffee trees, breathing calm and happiness. It was peace. The horses grazed in the shade of the urus, the children playing under the mangoes, women bathed among the rocks and a man was carving a wooden cockerel.

According to the custom of the islands, we dined alone and Willy's wife and daughters only appeared to serve us. Silence descended upon the valley and then it was the long night. Willy and I sat up very late talking of the island and of my projects.

"You must be patient, Mazière. Here time does not count and the object of your work will terrify the islanders. It is probable that whatever I say they will refuse to show you their grottoes. They will watch you all the time. Perhaps later they will help you. You know that many whites have abused their hospitality, have pillaged their caves and carried away the skulls. You would not accept such a thing in your country, so put yourself in their place.

"In this very valley a German and a special agent, to take only two examples, broke the Morai and tried to steal the objects inside the skulls. You have a chance and you may get through: this is the coast where no white man has yet penetrated. I will give you all the help I can, but you must give

me your word as a man that whatever discoveries you may make you will not carry away any relic."

"Willy," I answered, "you know that I went through Tumuc-Humac country without a gun, out of respect for the Indios with whom I shared my life. If I came here it is because my word as a man was given long ago."

"I trust you, Mazière," he went on, "but alas, in the twenty-six years I have lived on this island, I have only met a single white man who respected the natives and was loved by them. He was a young Englishman named Pitcairn. *Taoto maitai*: sleep well. If you like, tomorrow at five o'clock we will leave on horseback for Hanavave."

The cry of the cock aroused us at the first mists of dawn. Willy had already saddled the horses and his dogs were impatient. We returned to the beach at the gallop, crossed the stream which filters into the black sand and attacked the hair-pin climb above the bright blue bay. In the old days at the top of these 1,500 feet high cliffs, the warriors came to brandish their pennants and to blow on the conches.

"Do you see that little crest up there, Mazière? That is where the Queen of the Island is buried. Her tomb was rifled and the contents stolen. I was very young when that happened, but I remember the dismay it caused in the valley."

We climbed slowly and reached the summit of the plateau. The plateau is cleft by the Hanavave gorge and fringed by the lips of a crater into which wisps of cloud glided. A whirl of lassos above our heads and the horses set off at full gallop, excited by the wind and the call of the open country. Hooves dug into the moist earth, throwing up spurts of red mud.

We came out into corridors of pandanus, reappeared in the mango groves, skirted promontories and waterfalls. The path followed the crest overlooking Hanavave just as the sun appeared above the edge of the crater. The horses stopped abruptly and then felt their way surefootedly along the little track at the edge of the escarpment. Ahead of us was a pass,

## THE ISLE OF LEGENDS

already pierced by the sun. Its lava cliff rose to 2,500 feet tapering towards the peak. There is an enormous bubble in its walls which the sun strikes with its ray each day for a few seconds. It is a magic eye opened in the direction of the sun, a mysterious and terrifying symbol. The men of Fatu Hiva called it Te Vahine Naho—the Pass of Desire. The Spanish sailors baptised it La Puta—the Whore. So here were two mentalities which would never meet. The "Path of Desire" for the men of the sun, the "Whore" for the adventurers. On our maps it is still Puta; but it is the sun which illuminates it with its name Desire.

Far below, the tiny bay, surrounded by giant cliffs reflected the mother of pearl of the reef. Rising from the waves were three enormous monoliths. The lava outflow has divided the valley itself into the points of a star, its centre rising 1,000 feet above the forest like a fortress. This is where the Tiki men took refuge and embedded their coffins in the breaks in the pumice. It was a giddy descent to the forest and the horses were afraid. But at last we came to Hanavave.

At the village by the shore the people welcomed and watched me. The chief spoke to them, explaining that I wanted to make my headquarters there. A hut was placed at my disposal and I arranged to return in ten days.

In the interval I explored the Omoa valley. Each day opened up for me a fabulous domain of valleys and crests, all revealing their first secrets. I now had a companion Pau, who was to be my friend for several months. This man of thirty with the physique of a god, and a magnificently chiselled face, was the very personification of Tiki. Pau caught the wild goats as they ran away, climbed the lava ridges, could dive to twenty-six fathoms. We explored by plunging among the lianas and following the course of the waterfalls. Thus we came one day across an enormous block of stone wedged in the waterfalls. The sun drew our attention to its strange markings. It was encrusted with petroglyphs; Tiki heads, human figures and

fish of all kinds. We noticed one in particular, sixteen feet long and engraved two inches deep, a feat remembering that the task was carried out with stone tools. A votive stone. Its presence seemed incongruous in the centre of this mountain stream. So I decided to explore the neighbourhood thoroughly. We rummaged in the undergrowth for four days without result. At last Pau was attracted by one which seemed to be of a strange shape.

*Ako!* *Keal* Come quickly! a tortoise! A huge block of about four feet in circumference was in fact carved in the shape of a turtle balanced on another rock facing west. In the old days the priests moved the stone round in the direction which would be favourable for fishing. Turtles have always been much sought after by the islanders, as they were by the pre-Columbians, not only for their flesh but for their shells which apart from their usefulness as decoration, represented the myth of eternity, of duality and the creation of the world. The Tiki men saw in the turtle the symbol of immortality and of the perfect creation of the elements. On symmetrical tortoiseshell plaques they engraved images of the power and life of Tiki.

The Omoa valley extends to a depth of about two miles. For more than a mile and a half it is dotted with paepae, vast foundations of stone which once served as a base for the huts. We were able to recognise more than 200, an enormous number when one thinks that each paepae supported a hut which housed between ten and twenty people. We arrived very swiftly at the estimation of Captain Cook, who suggested that 5,000 inhabitants dwelt on the island. Then, however, there were at least ten inhabited valleys on Fatu Hiva. Today there are about 300 survivors distributed among the two valleys.

In the centre of Omoa village one can still see the traces of vast *kokai*, the public square where the entire population gathered for the feasts.



The original assembly place must have been about 300 yards square, but unfortunately the architecture has been completely wrecked by a flood which split it in two, scattering the flag-stones laid without cement. When I said that the paepae served as a base for the erection of the hut, I must explain myself, for this seems to be out of proportion. The house was in fact built of light material—bourao, pandanus or coconut palms—to shelter a single family, but it was essential that it was built on a foundation of stone sometimes reaching to a height of twelve feet.

There were two main reasons which forced men to carry out this arduous labour of carting and then carefully assembling the heavy stones. Firstly, to protect the house from flood and damp, though this would not alone justify such a work, since it would have been perfectly simple to build huts on poles. The second and main reason was that a Tiki man's head being sacred, he must never pass under the impure floor of a house inhabited by women. The ban went so far as to forbid a woman touching her husband's head. These interdicts served as a framework for a sociology rigorously designed to preserve a code and a precise conception of life for this tiny race of isolated emigrants. So far as the sexes were concerned the distinction between the male and the female was very clear. Man is the creator, the one who transforms, invents and protects. Woman is an essential life-giving element but being an earth-bound element she is therefore impure and can create nothing apart from life. Nevertheless she enjoyed complete liberty and respect.

\* \* \*

With the coming of the benefits of Christianity, all these disappeared. The nobility of these dwellings gave place to a bastard and often hideous construction, a pallid copy of our own dwellings, and the colonials are proud of having imposed their bad taste on this race of artists.

## IN SEARCH OF TIKI

In these houses the heat and damp condense, making life unbearable during the day. At night the cold moisture clings to the walls. The people succumb like flies to phthisis. Alain Gerbault denounced with great violence this imposition. The white men and their lackeys contrived to stifle his complaints. They were selling corrugated iron and concrete, not the memory of Alain Gerbault.

The ancient island hut was built quite differently and reached a length of sixty yards. On the square *paepae*, placed at a certain distance on the large facade, were carefully quarried stones, delineating the frontage of the house. A low door opened in this frontage of *bourao* logs. The roof, supported by large beams of *mei* fell at a sharp angle to the floor of the *paepae*. The roofing was made of overlapping *mei* leaves, the interior lined with *vahake* leaves which gave effective protection against the rain and the heat, but allowed the air to circulate freely. The door consisted of logs. These were placed at night between the two sculptured poles which served as an entrance.

Inside the house and along its length were laid coconut palm trunks, about five feet apart, marking the communal bed. This space was entirely covered with fresh and scented couch of mats, made of ferns and sweet smelling plants. One trunk of the palm served as a pillow and the other as a footrest. From the roof and poles were hung baskets containing headdresses and certain foods; weapons were always within reach. The interior decoration consisted of curtains made of different coloured beads, wild boar tusks or the skulls of the enemy. The walls were made either of *bourao* logs or of bamboo slats woven into a pattern.

I was in a hurry to get to Hanavave and to establish my base camp. I decided to leave on the following day in one of the canoes with the heavy material which could not be carried across the mountains.

Once you have travelled in these outriggers you acquire un-

limited confidence in this type of craft, which looks so fragile and yet displays a surprising seaworthiness. The canoes to-day are a pale reflection of the fabulous outriggers of the migration period which, in those days, reached a length of 120 feet and could carry up to 140 people.

In the islands to-day there are only small fishing canoes, larger and better built, however, than those to be found on the atolls or in the lagoons. Here they have to stand up to heavy seas and difficult beachings among rocks or on pebbles. The Marquesan canoes are built of a tree hollowed out into a main hull to which planks used as wales are added. The stem and stern slope upwards and tape, giving the craft great buoyancy on the waves. The outrigger itself is formed of a huge branch of bourao and two poles attached perpendicularly to the hull. This outrigger is not pliant to steer like those of Tahiti; it is solidly secured by whippings of mape rope and can thus resist the waves and keep the whole boat balanced.

The ancient building techniques is still applied to the whipping and the caulking of the various parts. A number of precious woods are to be found in the islands but these trees might be compared to the olive. It is very difficult, therefore, however thick they are, to find one tall enough to build a canoe from one single trunk. Planks of all dimensions are cut with an adze. They are assembled and secured to the hull by bindings of rot-proof coconut fibre. The joins of the parts and the caulking are done with tapa or mape bark. Although this technique gives the canoe a rather patchwork appearance, it makes it incredibly resistant and pliant. It has enabled the islanders to build whalers. I once saw one consisting of more than 400 parts assembled in this manner. In these whalers the men carry out voyages of between forty and sixty miles. I was present when one of them put to sea. The extraordinary advantage of the outrigger, apart from its seaworthiness, is its capacity for taking a sea on the beam, thus giving the fishermen great latitude of movement.

## IN SEARCH OF TIKI

Following the cliff in our canoe, we could see on the crest a huge paepae, the ancient abode of Tahua. Among the fissures of the lava we could make out the burial grounds and the stone redoubts from which in days gone by the look-outs could signal the arrival of more canoes or of the first incredible ships.

My real mission was about to begin.

## CHAPTER 5

### *The Storyteller*

THE torn and ravaged cliffs of Hanavave with their host of grottoes and shelters in the lava have always been an object of interest and admiration. They constantly spring to life, either by the spurting of an enormous blow hole which rainbows the rocks, falling in a spray of sunlit pearls, or by the sudden flight of seabirds which nest in the crevices among the lava.

Landslides of pumice stone fell roaring as our canoes skirted the coast. Wild goats leaped from spur to spur seeming to defy all the laws of gravity. They stopped, listened, looked at us and then, with a bound, took refuge in some narrow corridor or hid in one of the bird caverns. The white birds sped over the cliffs scanning the waves for prey. We stopped our canoes, which danced on the waves and the tiller man took his gun. On a jagged spur, a herd of eight goats stared at us.

One, two, three shots. With heart-rending cries three goats tumbled from the cliff in a vertical dive of more than six hundred feet. Two landed on the beach. One fell in the water. The sea was stained with blood and boiled as the sharks attacked. We could see their fins and tails. The goat disappeared in four seconds, carried off into the submarine grottoes. The goats which had fallen on the shore were cut up and the meat placed streaming with blood on top of the luggage. Everyone was happy and we discussed and joked about the hunt. Here life is very simple.

Far on the horizon, driven on by the squalls, a rainstorm bore down on us. The men had spotted it to shouts of "Akoi!" So we put about and ran for shelter. We made for Cape Matautua where we might find a submarine grotto but the rain caught us a few yards from the cave mouth and we

were carried inside by the swell. It was a dream aquarium. The water was clear and we could see hundreds of green, red or striped fish speeding among a maze of rocks covered with orange and violet sea anemones. The islands had donned once more their fairy tale aspect. This was a castle with a thousand unexplored dungeons full of shining treasures, of opals and diamonds, melancholy in silence, strange with the noises of the unknown.

When the canoe glided over the waves to emerge opposite the cape which keeps watch over Hanavave, a man greeted our arrival with a blast on his sea shell and dogs barked. The long rollers propelled our canoe over the black pebbles, to the foot of the bluff. I was astounded by the mass of lava needles rising vertically and we could make out the narrow path of the valley winding its way up to the Pass of Desire.

We all dived in the river to cool ourselves and to make the customary ablutions before a communal repast. This island custom reflects the astonishing cleanliness and the native dignity of these men for whom a meal is an honour paid to one's fellow men and to the gods.

The etiquette is well-defined and the courtesy quite natural. The first mouthful of food is flung over the shoulder as an offering to the gods who to-day are only the errant, hungry dogs. The meal is taken sitting on the turf or on a polished stone. Banana leaves strewn with tiare flowers as a table. All the dishes are spread out at the same time and everybody helps himself. Sucking pigs are roasted on volcanic stones, popoi, kaku, bananas, taro, raw fish and poe . . .

At the end of the meal the chief rose to his feet and addressed the guests. The islanders have an almost dedicated respect for speech and the meaning and value of words. These are men who have banished script from their lives. Script only transcribed deformed thoughts. Writing was only speech without a glance ; empty words. Speech was the exchange and the possibility of comprehension and osmosis between

men who lived in perpetual contact with reality. Their language had a subtle sound.

More than two thousand years before the Christian era the Tiki had a script. But it was banned from the community and preserved as a secret by the initiated whose aim it was to translate it into symbols embodying the action of life and which could be engraved on the very flesh of man in the form of tattoos.

For them now writing is the law of the gendarme who decides, cancels, decides anew and when asked about the problems of birth and death does not know the answer. To many white men the absence of a script among the tribes immediately stigmatises them as savages. It is very different when one understands the reason why they refused to accept this mode of communication, the consequences of which in their experience of the Christian era were terrible. For the Tiki peoples, who follow their destiny in pursuit of the sun, life is but a transitory crossing prior to the great voyage of death. They have accepted this principle of personal anonymity leaving to those of their people chosen for gifts of premonition and awareness the task of directing the progress of life and transmitting to future generations the knowledge of goals and tabus, confirmed by aeons of genealogies.

The men of Tiki, knowing the golden number, primarily established as the figures of life three and seven as in all cosmogonies. From these figures a very pure esotericism was born. The figure three represents man, not only in his divine trinity, but in the construction of the triangle and the pyramid : man's perpetual creation. The figure four represents woman ; earthbound in her perfect role of guardian of the hearth. The figures three and four, giving the figure seven, represents the human couple—eternity rediscovered. The perfect value of the circle represented life in its anonymity, the human group. The value of the circle had still been preserved intact up to two centuries ago. When Herman

Melville deserted from his whaler, he learned from the islanders a strange thing which he remembered at the moment when, with his companions, he mutinied at Tahiti. No one was willing to write his name first below the act of mutiny. So, like the Tiki men, they traced in the sand a large circle which they then shaded in with the sun's rays like a childish drawing, pronouncing one after the other the name of each of the sailors. The Admiralty was never able to discover the ring-leader of the mutiny. For the men of Tiki the circle represented the boundless globe, the unknown world of birth and death, in which they inscribed perfectly the square, the triangle and the cross, which became the human symbols of life on earth. These stylisations were in the nature of a first attempt at schematising speech. The signs were so important that they were endowed with a power of immortality, transmissible not only to those who drew them but to those whose spirits possessed an absolute knowledge of them.

From the perfect cross, the men of Tiki evolved the swastika which is merely the symbol of the setting in motion of the integral construction of the two axes inscribed in the circle. The perfect equal cross represents the pure creation of the god: set in motion by man it was broken at its ends and in future represented blind force, that force of evil which was to lead man to transgress the established order and to aspire to the godhead. These main symbols once established, the men of Tiki absorbed their value and in practice made use of their fabulous power. After centuries of research, the priests finally established a symbolical script which they decided could only figure on stones, wood or sacred objects. Later it was inscribed on the human body so that men should know the value and not use it for the impure divulgation of material ideas. The tattooing of men was to take place in suffering and lasted about ten years. It retraced on the body of the individual his past, his attributes and his myth.

A veritable script, not unlike that of Easter Island, was



created like a real book, an open book for the men of the sun alone to read. With the centuries it doubtless degenerated but on the eve of the occupation of the island by the Whites it was still very much alive and amazingly graphic. When in 1873 the French government forbade tattooing under pain of imprisonment, they doomed to a speedy death a script which preserved centuries-old secrets. I was lucky enough to meet the last man who in 1901 had been secretly tattooed, and I shall deal more fully with this later.

Like the Maya codices and the secret of the Rapanui script, the esoteric testament contained in the pictograms of the Tiki archipelago has now disappeared for ever. The civilised west can be proud of its handiwork. It will not, however, prevent us with our habitual hypocrisy from finding it perfectly normal that the king of Denmark, sailors and legionaries should be tattooed with effigies which are bizarre in the extreme.

The Marquesas are a world which has been castrated and forced to abandon its ethics beneath the colonial truncheon. But everywhere, barely audible, in the last breath of old men who no longer have the strength to transmit the past, can be divined and heard the secular history we have destroyed.

Next morning I obtained my first general impression of Hanavave. Planted in the centre of the valley was a volcanic cliff. The valley itself was a vast crater, luxuriant with flowers, palms and other vegetation and through which a river flowed, descending from a high plateau over mountainous territory and many waterfalls. The cliff was a great barrier dividing the valley-crater into two halfmoons, each surmounted with the extraordinary eminences of lava that I had already noticed from the sea and which rose above the rocky crests like enormous phalluses. The Bay of the Virgins was named in association with this phenomenon of nature.

I looked round on all sides trying to find breaks in the rock face at the head of the valley. The track led us above a mountain torrent which foamed over boulders wedged in the

roots of mape and to the foot of the crater. To our left was the old path which once led to the Pass of Desire where the women waited for the return of the men who had gone down into the forbidden valley. We continued on our way towards the head of the valley making for the waterfall. The rock face overhung six hundred feet. The falls ended in a natural basin. Long-eared eels live in this tiny reservoir—fabulous beasts which are only to be found in the lakes of the craters here and in Madagascar. This rocky arena, narrow and imposing, served in the old days as a place of meditation for the Tahua, a shrine of pagan worship where men found silence and the mute presence of nature. One can imagine the majesty of the ceremonies which took place in such a setting.

The setting sun lit up the cliff, until its rays reached the Pass of Desire ; its last rays flashed through the pass heralding the approach of night. Fires were lit, absorbing the flower-scented air. We watched the first stars.

Three, four, seven lamps, zigzagged towards us, outlining the silhouettes of their bearers. They arrived in silence regal as kings and sat down on the stones of the paepae. Night in the islands is sad. A great silence has by force of circumstances replaced the feasts and the jousts, the dances and the ceremonies. Nothing remains, everything has been forbidden, confiscated, ridiculed.

A diaphanous moon swathed the clouds and the valley in a scarf of light. A woman draped white like the ancient tapa, stepped forward—a marble silhouette holding a sleeping child in her arms. Her impassive face seemed to listen to the mysterious call of the tupapau the spirits of the night. The man at my side smoked. We waited for the storyteller.

Gently, almost inaudibly, rose his soft voice. His eyes were closed.

It was Atea the Great, the husband destined for Atanua  
It was Atea the vault of the sky who melts with the  
earth's horizon.



Are there anywhere in the world women more beautiful, lissom and natural in their bearing?



We have much to learn from the Polynesians in the matter of posture; upright, yet completely relaxed and unstrained



Searching the sea-shore for marine creatures and brilliantly coloured shells is a favourite and very pleasant pastime

Sheltered inlets provide perfect bathing for islanders who are as much at home in the water as they are on land





When you are hungry,  
you work. And work  
means fishing—from  
an abundant sea

Most of the creatures  
are old friends,  
yet some of them are  
always good for a laugh



## THE STORYTELLER

It was Atea the deep root  
It was Atea the source of all the Gods  
It was Atea who procreated his hosts  
It was Atea the diadem of the sky and the earth  
It was Atea the true god.

The ancient religion of the men of Tiki . . . The storyteller went on :

It is sex which writhes  
It is the sex of the female  
The sex which desires Atea  
The sex which desires the sex to pierce it  
*E kua moe ani e*  
Come my love, let us go  
For now the shadows have begun to fall  
Come, my Kua, hurry, hurry,  
Kua, my beloved Kua  
Come, let us go to a shady spot for day has died,  
Come, Kua, my love my sweet,  
Stay with me, Kua, my love,  
Stay here with me,  
The day has gone, let us talk of love,  
O Kua! Under the shade of the hiapo, in the shade.

O Kua! The hiapo is a beautiful tree erect as a temple of love, here are its roots hanging down to the soil, the birds settle on them, O Kua, and enjoy the fruits.

Let us gather the fruits of love, O Kua and let us never be assuaged. God is like man, O Kua, he loves both you and I.

I love you with an eternal love  
O Kua! I will keep you for ever  
My love for you is immense  
Let us embrace O Kua!  
To thank the God of Love  
Let us thank him fervently, O Kua!  
Little creature at my side . . .

The moon rent the clouds. The valley was bathed in a



## IN SEARCH OF TIKI

black light which turned the plumes of the coconut palms to quicksilver. "The moon makes the finest flowers open their petals."

It is the moon which is the wind  
It is the moon which is the power and the force  
It is the smoky water of the cascades  
The water of the falls  
The moon is the image of jealousy  
The moon is the sorrow of love  
The moon is the beauty of man  
The moon is the beauty of woman  
The moon is the sea which descends gently  
It is the full sea and the changing sea  
The moon which precedes love!

In this way in the old days, each night the people of Tiki learned the marvels of their legends, the grandeur of their religion. In their huts the night lights of candlenuts burned all night. The children could dream in peace because for them each night there was a new legend from the "Little Prince."

Under the infinite peace of the stars the man uttered his prayer:

Save me! save me  
It is the night of the gods  
Watch over me. Near me, O God!  
Save me from the enchantments of sudden death  
Allow me and my spirit to live and rest in peace,  
This night  
O God!

The night ended like the book of the Word. Under the mei, the small lamps twinkled while the men of Hanavave gazed at me.

What has remained of the people of the Tiki?  
Sixty-five inhabitants in the valley of Hanavave.



## CHAPTER 6

### *Forbidden Music*

**D**AWN had hardly broken when Pau brought the horses to the river to drink near small children splashing happily. Two men came and said "Good morning," suggesting that they should accompany me.

I suspected that the idea of seeing a white man hack his way through the forest with the machete I was sharpening amused them.

We rode in the island manner without a saddle and with a rope passed through the horse's mouth as a simple snaffle. It is a wonderful sensation, for man and beast are as one. The horses feel this and follow the least indication of the rider. The path had once been a huge raised stone road where five men could walk abreast. I was immediately struck by the significance of its construction, so similar to the pre-Columbian roads which the Mayas and Incas built across the Andean Cordilleras. The edges were defined by huge quarried blocks each weighing about four hundred pounds. The centre was banked up with stones over which polished flagstones had been laid. It must have been a well-established society to have been capable of creating such a system of roads and habitations in a country which bristles with lava. The highway was often cut by canals about ten yards wide designed to lead off the swiftly running waters during the big rains and thus prevent its being washed away.

We emerged on a plateau which rose in a gentle slope to the foot of the mountain containing the Pass of Desire. In

olden days the path ran up to the base of the precipice, on through the lianas and finally arrived at the last 300-foot escarpment of bare rock face in which a stairway had been cut leading to the pass, 1,800 feet above the valley.

To reach this pass and cross it to the east coast was my aim. As I shall explain later, the rocky steps had been broken, making it impossible to climb the wall. The only alternative was a ten-mile sea voyage round the windward capes.

On our way home Pau caught prawns and we picked a few bunches of watercress which the women cooked with the uru for our supper. Round the coconut fire we watched night steal into the valley. This was the hour when long ago could be heard the plaint of the *vivos*—long reed flutes like those used by the Amazon Indians.

One of my great wishes was to hear and try to notate this music which had almost disappeared from the islands. The chief seemed surprised that a white man could love this music which the colonials had tried for more than a century to make them forget. "*Mikeo nui!*" he said at last. "Mortal sin." That is what the missionary had told him. I should have constant difficulty in trying to make these men forget the gruesome bans imposed by the missionaries, with fines, confidence tricks and threats of purgatory and hell. Poor savages!

The night was so fine that we remained under the porch of the hut, admiring in the moonlight the immense surrounding crater which seemed to close in imperceptibly on the valley. One had the disturbing feeling of being a prisoner in a world built on a divine scale, a realm into which man had been flung haphazardly. It was perhaps this idea which made the men of the islands fear the night and never sleep without the comforting presence of a night light. These little lamps gleamed everywhere, like the reflection of stars in a lake, vanishing only with the first glimmers of dawn.

The villagers came again and grouped themselves around us, each carrying his little lamp. The chief sat silently by my

## FORBIDDEN MUSIC

side and we smoked without exchanging a word. Then he stood up, placed a lamp on the empty paepae in front of my hut. A regal old woman rose in her long black pareo; her hair hung down in two long plaits; her face was impassive. A few men and women went over and took their place beside her. The women sat down tailor fashion; the men squatted on a stone beside them, each with his head in his hands. Their eyes, which seemed unaware of us, were lost in the quest of an unattainable dream.

*Tau tino ite repo!* My body is in the earth! And the song rose, floating like the surging waves, telling of eyes about to close.

‘ My body is in the earth  
And I see your eyes  
I, whose eyes are closed for ever . . . ’

The women were singing the rari, the old grave rhythm of the tribe. In the light of the lamps, their waving hands seemed to be picking invisible flowers or to be following the flight of the gulls.

The moon, playing hide and seek in the clouds, lit up for a moment the giant lava hill where, under the winds and the song of the surf rested the canoe-shaped coffins in which their ancestors slept, far from the sight of men.

‘ On the earth there are flowers  
In the mountain the dead chief  
In the sky the great journey . . . ’

The great journey of the setting sun which lured men and abandoned them dying but intoxicated by their desires. The migrations had been too long; at their journey's end they found death.

Those faces and looks in front of me which seemed still to be sailing in search of the islands wrote for me the pages of this book. These young people whom we term primitive, they alone know how to efface themselves in the ultimate chivalry

of silence. As an ultimate safeguard of their past, they have retained the terrible defence of a smile.

At my side Pau was asleep or dreaming, his head on the polished flagstone, which outlined his steely features in the moonlight. Was I dreaming too?



The pau, the heavy shark-skin drums, summoned the valley to admire the sight of the sun dancers.

Te Moana entered, followed by his warriors. The wild notes of the sea shell rang out and the allied tribes, Twis, Happas and Taioas, rushed into the arena in full war dress; a vast "Hurrah" seemed to fall from the skies. Raising our eyes we saw on the surrounding crests groups of natives who had settled upon them like eagles. A call for help rang out and down the steep slope of the mountain coursed a torrent of four or five hundred warriors whose red and white cloaks opened to the sunlight like bright wings. At the same time, at the entrance to the arena, resolute, arrogant and proud, appeared the war-like tribes of the eastern part of the island.

On their heads they wore the tavaka, a large fan of dark green feathers. The fillet which ran from one temple to the other was a crescent inlaid with scarlet balls studded like a mosaic and fixed with gum. Two large, oval, whitewashed wooden plaques, fastened on a level with the ears, framed their faces. A cloak of tapa; a corselet of scarlet flannel secured by a gleaming mother of pearl medallion; a belt from which hung bunches of hair and skulls filled with little rattling pebbles completed the war paint. The old men and the priests with blue tattooing were naked. All the chiefs carried large white fans. Yellow coconut oil made the tattooings a greenish hue.

The women hardly moved and there was little gossip. They were dressed in their newest and most ample tapas, for luxury is measured by the amplitude of this cloak. Their headdresses

were just as complicated as those of the men, consisting of a headband of fine tapa, and a visor of yellow or red cock's feathers, raised like a helmet. From their ears hung red and green garlands and every woman waved a semi-circular fan. The whole splendour of savage pomp was all around. The languorous, garlanded women, with their rounded shoulders and full breasts, afforded an unforgettable sight.

A kind of master of ceremonies, holding a beribboned wand, showed the various strange tribes to their seats. The feast then opened with an explosion of war-like hurrahs which were taken up by the public. Soon the tom-tom began to throb and all the tribes in chorus intoned a hymn in honour of the new Tahua. The music was grave, slow and lilting. The echoing drumsticks and clapping of hands served as an accompaniment. War songs followed. Individual warriors beat their right hands with such force on their left arms that the flesh was bruised and the blood finally spurted. A certain agitation began to take hold of the audience; tavahas swayed and fans fluttered; guttural cries flew from one group to the other and an occasional silvery laugh came from a young girl at the attentions of the nave nave, the handsome genial poets, much beloved by the women and envied by the men . . .

A pantagruelian march past put an end to the war chants. At least a hundred Kanakas carrying whole roast pigs strung on bamboo poles, bags of woven leaves full of keika, yams, hands of bananas, and popoi in the shape of canoes, entered the stage and laid down their fruit and roasts on beds of leaves. The feast began.

A woman, looking up to the sky with dreamy eyes, murmured this love song which her companions repeated in an undertone with weaving hands :

*Kehu kehu e*  
*Kehu kehu te moana*  
*Te maua tioi oia me Iotete*  
*E ua vahi ua*

## IN SEARCH OF TIKI

*Etahi o pene hei koio  
E tou ta eva hinenao  
Mei tai mai Motuehitu  
Autaiپی e*

It is night—night, night on the sea  
I gave a kiss to Iotete  
He has two horns of hair  
And a pene of dolphin's teeth  
I love him very much  
He comes from the Motuehitu Sea  
He is the son of Autaiپی.

A triumphal procession followed. Pretty little girls were carried on the shoulders of robust men. They were dressed in a voluminous tapa robe with triple folds, falling in a train carried by other young girls acting as pages. One by one they were set down, some on a huge mat and others on stone pedestals: from this moment they became taboo.

Discarding their mantles, the girls adorned their fingers with rings of feather and tufts of white fur. Those on the mat carried out a dance which consisted of leaping alternately on each foot with circular movements of the hips and fluttering of wrists. The statues pivoted either from modesty to avoid the ardent looks focussed upon them or from coquetry. The dancers, their frail, delicate bodies beaded with perspiration, then assumed graceful postures while four women posted at the corners of the mat fanned them.

Now the bearers who alone had the right to touch them picked them up once more and after wrapping them in their mantles carried them to a shed where they were put in the care of matrons. The time had not yet come when, in accordance with the custom of which I shall tell later, they had acquired the right to change their name.

At sunset a torchlight procession with music set out to lay offerings at the feet of the gods. The Tiki draped in a tapa

## FORBIDDEN MUSIC

with a diadem of cock's feathers on its head was carried on a palanquin strewn with greenery.

Around the figure a host of white wands were planted like candles. Four men followed reminiscent of Roman lictors carrying the faxes; next came four women disguised as warriors, and then the porters with a roast pig, calabashes of kava, rosewood jars of popoi decorated with red tufts, bunches of feathers and clusters of beads.

After these had been placed on the altar next to a dog which had been sacrificed, the offerings followed the Tiki into a vahi tapu, a sanctuary of the gods.

It was night and I know that the men of Hanavave accompanied me till daybreak in a ceremony of olden days.

## CHAPTER 7

### *The Forgotten Tomb*

A COCK crowed. Uru and the flying fish which Tioka had caught were cooking on the fire. Now we could get ready to leave. Armed with our machetes we set out on a new reconnaissance through the valley which forms a left and forested flank to the cliff.

A tiny stream meandered and gleamed among the wild lilies, an Ariadne thread to guide our steps through the forest. On all sides we could see the paepae covered with wild vanilla; the sprawling roots of giant hiapo ran over the stones, lifting them high up into the branches. We advanced slowly high up the bank to get a better view of the dense jungle. Suddenly, perhaps thanks to the sun filtering among the creepers, I caught sight of a stone façade which seemed higher than normal. We descended to the river, using our machetes, but we lost our bearings and had to climb a tree to discover our position.

We hacked our way through the undergrowth, wriggled through creepers and suddenly a narrow corridor loomed ahead of us barred by a vast square of stones, twelve feet long and nine feet high, apparently still intact beneath its mantle of roots.

Our first job was to cut down the tall trees and clear the undergrowth. It turned out to be a building, the house of a Tahua which on his death has served as his burial place, the hataa. From a platform of polished stone a staircase led to another on which the house was built. The floor of the hataa had been hollowed out to serve as a coffin and then covered



with a tombstone of red tufa. It seemed to be carved with seven pictographs which would have to be cleaned—an arduous and meticulous task needing a scraper and water. Gradually the true colour of the stone re-appeared. It was a very bright clear orange, a mixture of volcanic tufa, very difficult to work, but the carvings stood out about half an inch in relief. Cut in a perfect six-foot square, the flagstones must have weighed about 1,200 lbs.

One could not fail to be impressed at the thought of the considerable labour required to erect such a tomb, when one reflected that the stone had to be quarried from the top of the cliff, cut on the spot and then slowly carried down to the valley. How did these men who were ignorant of the wheel manage to transport such monuments? I was to discover the explanation when, with the chief's permission, I excavated a tomb the following day.

A study of the stone revealed four ridges representing the Tiki man inserted in his square. A maze-like pattern was the path the dead man would have to take before arriving in the realm of the gods: on closer examination I noticed that while all the lines seemed to lead to the goal, one only actually reached it.

Two more unexpected figures were engraved side by side: namely, men with leonine faces and enormous pierced ears, the famous "long ears" of Amazonia and Easter Island. These figures left no doubt in my mind for the face was different from the representation of the Tiki. It was carefully drawn and wore a different expression, the skull was not flattened at the top and the long ears were pierced with holes. One of the figures represented teaching, the symbol of the Tahua which was engraved here on the tomb: the second represented knowledge. Another tombstone stood perpendicular to this but bore no carving.

The discovery amazed the men of the valley who were unaware that these sculptures existed, although they had been

carved only two hundred years ago. I could not help thinking of the problem of after-life which, for the men of Tiki, was the peaceful outcome of their terrestrial esotericism, a renaissance to be awaited with the punctuality and serenity of things long foreseen and desired.

Death was merely the return to Havaiki, the land of their ancestors, their Elysian fields. I wrote these pages that night . . .

Death among the men of the Tiki was the climax of a life, and people whose religion taught meditation had long since been prepared for the great journey. The maladies of the islands were all considered as a punishment from the gods for having broken a tabu. Leprosy, for example, was punishment for sexual intercourse during the period of menstruation.

Abscesses formed from having eaten fish reserved for the Tahua. Madness attacked those who had eaten tabu fruits. All these maladies were attributed to the gods. Death therefore did not terrify the men of the Tiki. It was, in fact, only a passage, the true purgatory before returning to Havaiki. As soon as the first signs of approaching death appeared a man hollowed out his canoe—a coffin in which he lay down several times before he died. He attended all the funeral preparations, carefully supervising the performance of the ritual which was to prepare him for his long journey to heaven.

The whole family surrounded the coffin and at the first signs of his death throes the chants rose accompanying the Haka-Heva, a dance which the prettiest women performed naked before the eyes of the dying man, so that he could take into the beyond a vision of the most beautiful things on earth. When the last breath of life left the body the widow pinched the man's nose and mouth to try and retain for a few seconds the spirit that was about to escape. A long wail would then ring through the valley announcing his departure for Havaiki.

The corpse was washed, adorned with all the man's treasures and exposed to the public gaze. Then began a meticulous

ceremonial which was faithfully observed so that the dead man could cross all the narrows of his long journey towards eternity. Unless all the phases of this ceremony were scrupulously followed, he could return to earth and torment the living.

The obsequies were of great importance when it was a question of a high dignity. When a chief or a high priest died, no fire was allowed to be lit for seven days and no one was allowed to leave the paepae or perform any profane act.

The first night of the wake was spent in singing the komumu, interspersed with long sobs. The following day the corpse, after being carefully washed, was wrapped in a huge strip of white tapa, sometimes twenty yards long. In this garb the body was laid in the centre of the hut which was decorated with tapa pennants and coconut palms plaited with leaves. Next it was placed on a huge wooden trestle exposed to the sun which gradually dried up the flesh inside the tapa.

There is an account by Radiguet, written in 1843, of the making of this tapa. "The operation is simple enough: the woman cuts a piece of bark, mei for preference, at a place where there is no knot. She washes the strip in the river, letting it soak for several hours if necessary to soften it. The work is now prepared. It only remains to take two very simple instruments which serve to make the material: a well-polished, slightly convex stone for beating and a square mallet of iron wood fifteen inches long with a face of not more than two inches. The latter is ridges along its length and these ridges give the material its special texture.

"Squatting in front of the polished stone, a wooden bucket at her side, the woman begins this slow work; the more rhythmic it is, the more perfect will be the result. She lays the piece of bark on the stone and begins to beat it at one end with swift blows until the bark gradually distends. When the whole length of the material has been beaten it is turned over and the work begins on the back. Then it is folded in two or three thicknesses and beaten vigorously.

"The material is frequently moistened from the bucket of water until at last it is possible to roll and beat it like a ball of potter's clay. Finally the material is stretched out while still damp and placed to dry on a stone that has been warmed by the sun. To prevent it shrinking the edges are weighed down with pebbles. From a piece of bark forty inches long by eighty, a woman used to be able to obtain about one square yard of material.

"Tapa is a marvellous material for the islands. It is light, cool and lets through the wind. A tear can immediately be repaired by beating the two edges together. It has all the stiffness of starched material."

During the night the body was carefully frictioned and salved with pani, a mixture of coconut oil, tiare flowers and various other concoctions made from leaves and sweet smelling wild herbs.

This procedure, followed over several days, finally produced mummification.

The period of mourning lasted almost a week. All the families, and sometimes a whole valley if the dead person was an important figure, attended. Laid out regally in his white tapa, the body was in evidence at all the feasts which in their gaiety, abundance and exchange of conversation were to remind him of his life on earth.

If the dead man had been a chief or was a high priest who was to be deified, he took the name of Atua, immortalising him. The ritual then exacted that nine feasts should take place, during which seven human victims were sacrificed.

As soon as the corpse was considered to be sufficiently embalmed it was placed in its canoe coffin, the vaka-tupapau, covered with a sort of hut of coconut palm leaves with a little opening through which could be inserted the offerings. The body surrounded with its last earthly gifts, weapons and ritual jewels, remained exposed in the vaka-tupapau until it began to decompose. This sometimes took several months. The bones

## THE FORGOTTEN TOMB

were then carefully collected. The families chose a few of them to make into certain sacred carved objects, in particular the ivo-po, a kind of ring threaded with tresses of hair.

All the objects which had surrounded the dead man were burned. If he had died of a disease even the house was destroyed and the paepae abandoned.

For a long time the dead man continued to receive offerings, which would not only help him on his way but preserve the living against the anger of the spirit.

\* \* \*

To open a tomb was a most delicate affair, particularly on the moral plane. I had to have a long conversation with the men of Hanavave before I could risk undertaking this task, which could well have seemed desecration.

Patiently, night after night, I explained why I wanted to carry out these excavations and gave my word of honour that nothing would be ransacked or stolen as had usually happened.

One evening the chief told me that he had chosen six men to accompany me and that the opening of the tomb would take place the following morning at daybreak.

I reflected late into the night. Although in my heart I know the value and probity of my work, I did sometimes doubt in the face of the completely different outlook possessed by these men.

It was still dark when Pau woke me up. Everything was ready. I did not know how we should proceed in our task of raising the heavy tombstone but I asked no questions. As soon as we arrived in sight of the tomb the men plunged into the undergrowth. I could hear the ring of the blades. One by one they returned, shouldering a stout, carefully whittled branch of bourao. We took up positions round the stone. I did not know exactly how to take hold of it for it rested perfectly on its support. We had to proceed with caution for it rested on small rims and any loss of balance would have made it

topple and break under its own weight. Two nooses of rope were finally passed under and round.

Then three long bourao poles were passed through the loops above the stone crossed like the spokes of a ship's capstan. Each man took hold of one end. At last I knew the principle of how the men of Tiki, like their brothers of Rapanui, could transport the stones weighing several tons which they used in building their cyclopean monuments.

The rope was tautened carefully to avoid any shock and to find the exact balance. The men never spoke. A glance was exchanged and their muscles grew tense under the effort. Gently the stone came loose. It moved inch by inch. The sun infiltrated. The white bones gleamed on the black soil. Two skeletons lay side by side with their arms close to their sides and their heads facing the east.

I descended into the hollow alone to examine them, a man and a woman. Strips of tapa were still attached to their ribs but time had reduced all votive objects to dust. A few pieces of shell were all that remained of the *paakea*, the funeral adornment on Tahua's forehead. This tomb could not have been more than two hundred years old.

At the extremities of the crypt were two squares of red tufa, serving as a pillow and footrest for the dead man. Like the Egyptians, the old islanders placed in their coffin canoes a neck rest in the form of a crescent moon or a solar barque which was to support the head on the long voyage to eternity. Sometimes the hair, plaited in tresses, was inserted into holes in the bows of the canoe.

The tombstone was engraved only on one surface and the figures aligned on a single side. In the centre two little Tikis back to back represented the twin principles of the double and the shadow. On the right three human figures denoted the divine trinity reunited in unity, death. Each was a man enclosed in a circle, his two arms raised at right angles, his two legs folded back at the same angle, the embryonic represen-

tation of man before his endowment with intelligence: toad, lizard or reptile. The men stared at me in nervous silence. As soon as I had finished and the objects had been photographed the stone was replaced.

Each day we discovered new testimonies of the past. I was quite convinced that coffins still rested in the contours of the wall of lava that loomed in front of my hut. One day the chief decided to accompany Pau and myself.

The lava bristled with rough protrusions which broke off at the least pressure, making it difficult to get a safe hold, so we tackled the climb barefooted with the aid of our machetes and a mountaineering rope.

There was no question of attacking the fortress frontally for there were too many overhangs. We should have to approach the ridge surrounding the crater and come upon it from the rear.

With difficulty we climbed the first mape-covered escarpment. The forest was wet and our bare feet skated in warm mud which trickled between our toes. Two hours later we reached the summit, a tiny ridge windswept and arid.

We descended, glued against the rock face six hundred feet above the forest. The tiny village lay below. We arrived at an enormous toa, its roots clutching to the rocks. Thirty feet below the chief, who had preceded us, now signalled us to wait. He would throw us a rope so that we could descend in safety. We belayed it solidly to the roots. Then we hurled ourselves into the void, using our feet on the rock face, and so discovered a huge fault in the formation of a cave. We slipped into the corridor where the coffins stood in rows.

Three huge canoes each full of bones faced the rising sun which for centuries had brought to them the sweetness of life even in death. Sheltered from the rain, the damp and decay, the bones, exposed to the sun, had turned a strange striped pink.

In one coffin the thick tapa mattress had been almost entirely



preserved, the decomposing body having only eaten away a small strip. The bones now lay there on a snowy shroud. This tapa must have been sumptuous for ten thicknesses remained intact.

The hair of a woman had been completely preserved, making the skull look like a mask. The strangest thing—I could not credit this although in 1595 Quiros reported the presence of many blonde natives—was the beautiful light chestnut colour of this flowing mane.

We stood silent. Perhaps we were awed by the presence of the dead, by the still living hair, that blonde hair. I asked the chief's permission to cut off a lock. It would be a precious document for me. He also authorised me to take a piece of the tapa because the texture was of the greatest interest. I could not stay there too long; it was already a miracle that the chief had allowed the visit.

How were these canoe-coffins placed there?

For the islands it was no mystery. The gods gave men the superhuman power necessary to carry out this last procession. When man concentrated he acquired extraordinary power. These fabulous exploits of which they themselves would no longer be capable, have entered into the domain of legend. Actually their ancestors had built a long road to the caves and erected staircases.

The coffins were hoisted by bourao ropes. Then, having blocked the entrance to the caves, the men destroyed their temporary passages and the vegetation soon hid all traces of the disturbed terrain. Just as rapidly the site became unknown except to the family. I discussed this subject with the men but they would never admit it, maintaining that the ancients had done this work with the aid of the gods.



## CHAPTER 8

### *The Love Legend of Tohuia*

**I**N the distance we could hear the dull rumble of the storm. Fatu Hiva donned its indigo cloak—a dark backcloth against which the lightning played.

Crouching in our hut we waited for the lightning to give us a lurid vision of the volcanic world which seemed to conjure up before our eyes the tragic history of the birth of Fatu Hiva.

The cliffs lit up, their shapes spurting into the void, chasing terrified terns into the night.

The storm suddenly burst in violence, crashing against the lava with zigzag lightning flashes, bowing green vaults of the forest and staining the stream a murderous red.

We smoked, listening to the sound of the downpour beating on the leafy roof. The east wind sprang up off Hivaoa, and the gusts chased away the storm. Fatu Hiva was reborn in the silvery music of the falls which in their hundreds cascaded down the face of the cliffs. Next morning dawn would reveal the mountainsides sparkling with geysers.

Now everyone in the hut remained silent, encouraging the story teller to speak and guide them through another night of dreams.

Calmly the voice of Kitepatoa began to relate the beautiful love legend of Tohuia.

\* \* \*

After leaving king Tuaokakiau, Tevaitotokua lived for a few lonely moons in the valley of Hanamoohe.

She took a new lover and chose Tohuia (the axe of peace).

## IN SEARCH OF TIKI

One day two tupapau (ghosts) arrived at the door of their hut.

These two ghosts were called Poi and Poa. As soon as he saw them Tohuia said: "Stay with us, we'll have a feast together." And he said to Tevaitotokua, "Prepare the feast and go fetch water from the river."

Then Tevaitotokua descended to the river which she found completely dried up, and to find water she had to climb far into the valley.

During this time Poi and Poa said to Tohuia: "Leave your wife who is ugly. If you follow us we will lead you to a woman of unimaginable beauty."

"Is it possible," replied Tohuia, "that there is a woman more beautiful than mine?"

"Your wife is hideous compared with the one we wish to give you," replied the ghosts. "Her skin is as white as the milk of the coconut."

Then Tohuia fell in love with this mysterious woman.

At last Tevaitotokua returned from the depths of the valley and began to prepare the meal, but the two ghosts said: "Do not trouble, we have finished eating."

That evening Tohuia said to his wife. "Come, we'll go and fish on the reef." When they reached the rocky promontory, Tohuia said to her: "Let us rather bathe."

And they swam for a long time, a very long time for Tohuia wanted Tevaitotokua to be so tired that she would fall into a deep sleep. And this happened as soon as they returned to the hut.

Then Tohuia left the hut and woke his two brothers and said to them: "Poi and Poa have come and promised to give me the most beautiful woman on the island. Come with me." And his two brothers replied: "They have lied to you, Tohuia, for we know this woman, she is ugly and full of sores."

But Tohuia would not listen. Seeing that he would not be dissuaded they fetched his outrigger and said to him: "Come."

## THE LOVE LEGEND OF TOHUIA

Tevaitotokua awoke just before dawn to find that her husband had gone.

She got up and started to search for him through the valleys. From the hill she saw an outrigger disappearing in the distance and thought that this must be Tohuia. "Come back, Tohuia," she cried, "come back."

But the canoe sailed on.

Then, crazed with despair, Tevaitotokua climbed the rocks above the bay until she fell and died at the foot of the cliff.

From the canoe Tohuia heard her death cry and said to his brothers: "Let us go back."

"It's too late now."

"Put about," said Tohuia, and the canoe put about. He and his brothers then looked for the body and placed it on a paepae which they built.

When they had finished their work Tohuia said: "Now let us go and look for the woman the ghosts promised me."

They arrived at the home of Poi and Poaa who led Tohuia to the woman he had so ardently desired. Then the two brothers said to Tohuia: "Look at the woman whom the Tupapau promised you. Look how ugly she is. We told you so."

"Her name is Teeifainu."

And when Tohuia approached her, the woman cried: "Do not come near me. Look at my sores. Do not catch the disease which is eating me away. Leave me, for you are handsome."

But Tohuia turned a deaf ear and went so far as to accord her the pleasures of love. Poi and Poaa then approached and killed Tohuia and for three days feasted on his corpse.

His two brothers collected his bones and brought Tohuia back to life.

And three times the devils killed Tohuia, ate him, and three times his brothers resuscitated him.

Seeing that Tohuia was always brought back to life the devils grew tired and left him in peace.

Tohuia then remained with Teeifainu who was expecting a child. One day the woman asked Tohuia to go and get her some fish for which she had a longing and since he could never refuse her anything he went fishing.

On seeing this the two brothers waited a little, stole up on Teeifainu and killed her, then they left and hid in the mountains.

On his return from fishing Tohuia found Teeifainu's body and searched everywhere for his brothers. Tired of being alone he took his outrigger and returned to Hanamoohe.

As soon as he arrived in the valley he visited the paepae on which the body of Tevaitotokua reposed and to his amazement noticed that his wife's body had not decomposed.

"My wife is beautiful," said Tohuia. He wrapped up all the finery and all her tapa in a bundle of leaves and descended into Havaiki to find her spirit.

And the maze which leads to the realm of death is long but at last Tohuia arrived and met Te Upu-Torofiti (the guiding hand).

"Te Upu-Torofiti, Prince of the Dead," he said, "tell me, have you seen the spirit of Tevaitotokua who is my wife?"

And Te Upu-Torofiti replied: "Yes, she is the most beautiful woman in Havaiki."

"I have come to find her," said Tohuia.

"Stay here and you will soon see the spirit of your wife pass," replied the Prince of the Dead. "Hide yourself and watch."

Tohuia hid behind the prince's cloak and as soon as he caught sight of Tevaitotokua he said: "Prince, that is my wife."

The girl approached the Prince of the Dead and asked permission to go bathing with the other spirits. "You must bathe at my side," replied Te Upu-Torofiti.

The girl bathed in the shelter of the prince's cloak and when she had finished she said: "Give me my robe."

## THE LOVE LEGEND OF TOHUIA

And the prince passed her the wedding dress she had brought. Tevaitotokua took the dress and cried: "Oh, Prince, the smell of this tapa reminds me of my life on earth."

Tohuia had tied the neck of the dress and when Tevaitotokua tried to put it on she found herself a prisoner. Then he put his arms round his wife and held her fast.

Upon seeing this the prince said to him: "Now, in no circumstances must you let Tevaitotokua go. Even if your wife asks you for a drink, to look or to make love with you, in no circumstances must you loosen your embrace or her spirit will return to Havaiki."

Tohuia listened and returned to earth. As soon as he reached the valley of Hanamoohe he visited the paepae where the corpse of his wife lay motionless.

Then he gently took the spirit and introduced it into the ear.

Gradually the toes began to move. On seeing this Tohuia said: "My wife is alive," Gently the foot, the leg, the arms and the body began to flutter. "My wife is alive," repeated Tohuia and Tevaitotokua's eyes opened.

"Oh, I have slept so long," she said.

"No, you have not slept," replied Tohuia, "but now, Tevaitotokua, there is life in you. I can smell your perfume now, Tevaitotokua, you are my wife with whom I shall live for ever in all the ecstasy of love!"

★   ★   ★

The legend was so beautiful that dawn surprised us wide-eyed at the marvellous spectacle of the first gleams of day, bordering the lips of the crater with its rose-hued and silvery waterfalls.

## CHAPTER 9

### *The Island that Died*

**D**ESPITE the rain-soaked roads we set out to reconnoitre on horseback in the direction of the Omoa pass. The rivers, laden with red silt, were in spate and the horses had great difficulty in crossing the fords.

We began the stiff climb once more to the crest above Hanavave, where the view was magnificent: on all sides the cascades fell, seeping into all the rocky crannies, vapourising and being carried away in spray by the wind. In the sunlight the valley, still bright with raindrops, gleamed like a lake of mercury. In the distance the pale blue bay was sullied with orange stripes from the mud carried down by the rivers.

We pulled up at the top of the spur overlooking the bay. The plateau rose gently, swept by the sea breeze which chased the hosts of dewdrops from the ferns. The horses neighed in the wind as though called to their wild brothers. In the bay a school of porpoises started to play. It was six o'clock and we had a long day of exploration ahead of us. The air was delightfully cool and from the bottom of the valleys columns of mist rose at the behest of the wind. On the plateau the pandanus bushes let fall their leaves like long tresses of hair.

We entered the corridors of lianas and reeds which, heavy with rains, lashed our bodies. At the foot of the mangoes the storm had spread a carpet of fruits which made the horses stop. Everything was alive. I listened to the breathing of my horse, felt the presence of the forest—a branch breaking, a bird flying up or a gust of wind shaking the branches of the mangoes.

## THE ISLAND THAT DIED

In utter contrast, the plateau had served for years as a no man's land between the enemy tribes of Omoa and Hanavave, a hunting ground where men spied on each other, trying to cross by night to surprise the other's sleeping valley, and here and there a few wild horses seemed to be awaiting the arrival of the warriors. The plateau reaches the centre of the island, skirts the lip of the crater to fall vertically on the eastern side where, however, a few open passes in the cliff give access to the closed valleys joined below by the barren waste.

The eruption of the volcano had thrown up vertical valleys of lava and left a ravaged landscape which the wind and sun continued to destroy and burn, transforming it into a desert of orange and mauve tufa.

It is a vista of infinite melancholy and I felt hesitant. It would seem that this realm was unapproachable: it was the antechamber of the gods. That is what I was to discover during the next few months. From our lava roof there was a view over nearly the whole island and I took advantage of this to get my bearings. Beyond, a twelve feet wide pass opened—the huge Ouia valley which Thor Heyerdahl penetrated a few years ago. This is the only valley on the east which had been explored.

It was forty-five days before the ship would return, so we made many trips from the home of Willy and his family. As I began to prospect the plateau, I soon found a landmark, two lone palm trees. I had already learned that in all the islands I had visited, the presence of such trees invariably meant that they were either an indication of a human trail or else an early forgotten settlement where there was water.

Time passed but at last I found the first evidence—a polished axe in this land of silence. It must have been carried there by one of the frequent landslides of stone and rock, but I knew I was on the right track. Taking my time, I made new finds of engraving tools and adzes. There was now no doubt; I was in a part of the island which had once been populated,

for tools and hunting weapons are the first signs of former community life.

The nearer I approached the lone palms, the more numerous became my finds. The plateau ends in a narrow terrain overlooking the two bordering valleys. A stone polisher testified that I was near a village and suddenly I came upon a deserted workshop. Here and there a number of half-complete blocks made me decide that the village must have been abandoned very suddenly. At last I found my first intact axe. It always fills one with surprise and emotion to find these signs of a life which has disappeared. At the same time it made me recall the existence of another yet similar humanity which I have met all over the world. I remember feeling exactly the same ten years before when I explored the Crystal Mountains in Gaboon and, on their peaks, found workshops exactly like these, not only in their location, but in their artefacts. However, the discovery of this habitat afforded an irrefutable proof of the anterior or simultaneous presence on the island of two civilisations.

Here there were no traces of paepae or of cubic stone foundations. There was only the testimony of this tool, showing that the race which had lived here was certainly the last group of black-skinned people to inhabit these islands. The melanoids were chased away by the arrival of the men of Tiki who set the seal of a civilisation at least technically superior upon their conquest. These were the invaders who built the paepae, which are such an outstanding feature in the other islands. Even though I was not justified in basing my theories entirely on the stone implements, the Tiu technique was clearly melanoid, whereas that of the men of Tiki not only showed a different type of construction but a certain refinement. Each hour of my quest divulged the secret of the legend which the east coast would gradually reveal to me.

Three days spent on the plateau allowed me at first sight to corroborate the legend of the Tius. Chased from the west



coast, these men crossed the ridge, seeking a last refuge on this plateau to which access was rendered almost impossible by the sea. It is probable that for a long time this last autochthonous group stoutly resisted conquest by the men of the Tiki. The hybrid anthropology of these islands reveals, in the light of this conquest, that men superior in technique invaded the islands long before the Christian era. According to the custom of so-called primitive societies, they killed the men but spared the women whom they took as concubines. Two racial elements thus rapidly mixed and within a few generations created that hybrid race which complicates the history of the South Seas.

The separation of the islands explains the strange phenomenon of neighbouring islands peopled entirely by different races. As in cases of mixed blood between white and black races—to quote only two major groups—the negroid influence predominates and the race of the Tiki rapidly lost its physical character to the advantage of the melanoid. We must recall that in 1595 Quiros recorded the presence of blond elements with blue eyes, leaving to history that extraordinary document which this book is intended to elucidate in the light of the Kon-Tiki expedition. It is certain that modern researches into the origin of races proves extremely delicate because of the increase in cross-breeding, particularly since the arrival of the first discoverers. But a far more subtle source brings us back on the path—the surprising analogies of behaviour which, down the centuries, allow us a glimpse into their origin. I was constantly to discover or, more precisely, to suspect this analogy during my stay among the Amazonian Indians and the Polynesians. The archipelago has left the record of a psychic history of two mixed yet utterly dissimilar races.

With Willy and a few men we also explored the deserted coast by canoe for here, according to legend, lived an important race which was expelled by war and left on rafts.

Rounding the southern cape, where the ocean with lashing

waves seems to be taking a wild revenge over the defiant islands, had not been without danger, and once more I could not help admiring the calm of these men in the face of perils. They make the same gestures and possess the same calm as the Indians of Amazonia when shooting the rapids. This physical awareness of danger harmonised with the perfect balance of effort and abandon, are quite extraordinary. The great tragedy our civilisation brought to the island was the wish to sever these Tiki people from their total participation in the elements—which are life. Without this, these men can only disappear or, what is even more abominable, prostitute themselves by contact with a “modern” reality which, in actual fact, is only the cruelty of life.

After rounding the cape we were faced with an infinite expanse of sea-lashed shore. The southern cape extends in an immense plateau ending with promontories of lava in the form of a splayed hand.

This plateau, the former home of the Tiu, and once covered with forests of to and miro, was the last paradise of a race which, towards the eighteenth century, left once more in search of the lands of the sun to disappear for ever from the history of the islands.

With the departure of the people, the earth died. Today the plateau is no more than a weird desert of twisted trees, withered and whitened by the briny storm wind, strange abandoned kingdom which could not survive its sweet childhood. The sun has discoloured the soil, turning it the colour of the fire which gave birth to it when the volcanoes threw up the islands.

Here had lived the Tius. No one knew whence they came. They were probably the last survivors of the autochthonous race which sought refuge here. Defeated in their last battle (the storyteller says that they numbered eight hundred), they set out on their rafts in search of adventure and the sea has

preserved their secret. The east coast then became a land of silence.

We took several days' rest so that I could assemble my notes and write letters. One morning as I was writing, Willy came in with a man who apparently wanted to show me a stone mirror, "the mirror of an ancient prince." As I was familiar with the lenses of polished stone which in antiquity served as mirrors for the Egyptians, I was eager to see this.

We went off to his hut in the mango grove and there, buried beneath a pile of stones, was a huge polished stone containing in its centre a carved hollow square of some twenty-four inches, edged with parallel notches. The stone, about five feet long, was placed like a table in the shade of the paepae, but although the workmanship was very fine and it was in an excellent state of preservation, I could not understand how it could represent a mirror.

"Do you want to see?" asked the villager, and went out.

A few minutes later he returned with water and a handful of black moss which he laid on the bottom of the square as a reflecting surface.

Gently, so as not to disturb the bottom, the man poured in the water and as it settled I saw appear, as though by a miracle, his head leaning over the mirror. The more the shade, the clearer the mirror. A mirror of Narcissus, it evoked the romance of olden days when the prince each morning must have come in the shade of the mangoes to polish his magnificent tattooing, to plait his hair and fasten his tortoiseshell paekea.

This discovery, which held me spellbound, reminded me once more that archaeology can never be more than a dead science unless it can be assisted by someone to whom has descended some knowledge from a bygone age. Any other archaeologist might have discovered this graven stone but not its secret except with the aid of a so-called primitive race—a

race not yet contaminated by the monstrous slogan, "Time is money."

Without the amazing Kon-Tiki expedition, the new ideas it posed would not have been acceptable, for certain stay-at-home research workers had long ago established to their own satisfaction that the populating of these islands arose from successive conquests from the Javanese Islands to the Marquesas.

It was logical that the imagination of scholars should conjecture the history of migrations much as one establishes an itinerary, namely by examining the nearest points on a map. Nobody contemplated that the Tiki race would have dared the four thousand miles of watery expanse that separates the Americas from this group of islands in the South Seas. This history of the world is written by men of unflagging hopes, steeped in the tradition of the Flood.

The days passed and on the eve of departure there was arranged a grand farewell. Woven necklaces were gracefully given, flowers were laid at the porch of my hut and children brought me oranges.

As night fell the whole village assembled and once again I saw the nobility of the faces of these men and remembered the words of an old chief, "You have given us your liberty, your equality, your fraternity, but never your heart."

And old Raa-tira stood up and said: "For you, the white man who loves the pahu, I am going to tell the long history of the gods." And this was the story which I learned on this island of yesterday:

"The original abode of man was the sky where the person of Tanaoa was ever present.

"O'Mutuhei was also up there. He had neither voice nor sound. Nothing living as yet existed.

"The day did not exist, the light had not yet appeared, everything was in a twilight and Tanaoa reigned over the

## THE ISLAND THAT DIED

darkness. The spirit of O'Mutuhei could extend everywhere, from Tanaoa to Atea, very vast and very powerful.

"Atea was the master of the light. He embellished Tanaoa with his luminous rays for until then Atea and Tanaoa were between the light and the darkness. Tanaoa was filled with an immense joy.

"Atea gave much. Tanaoa retained and absorbed all that Atea sent him. One side of Tanaoa was always in the shadow.

"Atea was handsome, brilliant and ethereal. From Atea emerged Ono, the master of sound, who modulated his voice to charm Mutuhei, a great princess for the friends of Atanua, the beautiful, the pretty; at dawn he donned his trappings for Atanua the sweet and tender virgin.

"Atea took Atanua to wife. Atanua the fertile gave birth to all that lives.

"Atea and Ono travelled through space for Atea was the body and Ono the spirit.

"Atea and Ono were one and the same. Atea is the body, the spirit is Ono.

"Atea is the strength of the body, Ono is the soul. The abode of men was a place of delight and their dwellings were raised on tall magnificent paepae. They sat there high in the air, discussing the beginning of space and everything was dependent upon them.

"The first men in those days lived in the sky and the two fine paepae floated in space, the two fine paepae erected for the great master, Atea. The great master Atea created all this for love of the beautiful Atanua.

"An eldest son was born to him, heir to his title, the great chief Teunatapu. This little prince was born with divine power and he reigned over everything on earth as in heaven.

"He was the king of all space, the first born heir of the great power. The son, the father and Ono dwelt together but they were all united in the same person.

"The father, the son and Ono the spirit were all three

## IN SEARCH OF TIKI

of the same origin. They came from the sky, they were all good and in possession of eternal salvation.

"They were the image of the sky, the creator of all the heavens, they were the brilliant, swift-footed, dazzling sons.

"Atea is the saviour of the body and the guardian of the spirit.

"I have told you all this in order that you may know it as we do."



The many carvings and engravings of fish reflect the islanders' complete dependence on the sea. Its changing moods are known like those of an old friend whose idiosyncrasies command a very healthy respect







*Left:* A stone polisher, typical of many in constant use

*Right:* The carefully designed markings of the last tattooed man of the islands





In statues, on walls, in partially completed carvings from rock, again  
and again we come across Long Ears

Great store was placed on fertility symbols such as these, male and female





A votive statue of the Goddess Nere on Hivaoa, an island of the Marquesas

## CHAPTER 10

### *The Faith of the Tiki*

**S**COURING for traces and relics of the life of the men who centuries before had fled the islands, I was gradually able, with Pau's help, to conjure up some of the history of the men of Tiki—the men whom the conquistadors, armed with guns and full of vile diseases, had called savages.

The men of Tiki lived under the aegis of the one they recognised as being the most fitted to guide them—Hakaiki, the chief. Each valley was inhabited by one or more tribes and between classes there was no rampart such as separates the poor from the rich in our civilisation. The chiefs, by their valour and merit, were accepted as the most just and the most qualified leaders of the people. Any man could attain the highest position according to his qualities and this pledged him to the greatest integrity. The people of the Tiki would never have allowed the one who guided their destinies before God to distort the oral message of which he had the honour to be custodian.

A few words of explanation are necessary here. We are about to examine the legendary life of races which, isolated from the world, for centuries safeguarded the purity of the idea that life and death are united and the sojourn on earth was merely an initiation into immortality. We white men have based our ethic of life solely on the artificial pride of our earthly position, taking refuge in charity and confession. How then could we understand the empirical idea of man incarnated in his life, of man who seeks only total integration in the anonymity of the group.

Let me say at once, to spare the reader from illusions of

idealism, that these men were cannibals. This pregnant word has too often served as our sole excuse for the abominable massacres we have engaged upon in order to "civilise" such "savages." And yet, in the whole of their history these same "savages" have never had to blush for concentration camps.

I was told that the chief was a friend. All were a big family round him. Together all worked to make life beautiful in the valley.

"When the chief made a decision we did as he requested because it was always for the good. He had discussed the matter at great length with the elders who knew perfectly well what was good for their children."

The chief's first child, son or daughter, was the Great One, for he had inherited all the qualities of his father and all his worldly goods.

"He was very respected, did not work like us, for he had to learn by heart and with his heart the long tradition, the genealogies of his tribe. It was he who had to preserve for us the treasure of our past.

"The child grew up and learned. If a boy, the chief did not abdicate in his favour until he reached manhood, and the counsel of elders had to judge him worthy to be king, otherwise choose another."

The chief was always clad in a red loin cloth made from the bark of a banyan root. He chose and directed all people's tasks, but his authority was entirely patriarchal. On his visits to the valleys he was accompanied by a servant who aided him and blew his conch to summon the workers. He was greatly respected and everything he possessed was tabu. At the great ceremonies he alone had the right to carry the crescent fan, the handle of which was carved from a human bone.

The woman chiefs could have one or several husbands to help them in their functions, but only one had the right to bear the title and he had to originate from a princely family.

## THE FAITH OF THE TIKI

The highest position in the tribe could devolve upon a woman. This testifies to the great respect, I do not say the great liberty, enjoyed by the women of the Tiki. In all these races the unity of the human couple respected the equal duality of the sexes which could only create life by their union. It is a misconceived idea that they were slaves to their husbands. They have here a role, a task, and a heavy responsibility.

Very close to the chiefs and their equals in position were the Tahuas. These inspired priests served as intermediaries between the tribe, its chiefs and the gods. Their influence was considerable and they were usually the chief's occult adviser, for no decision was ever taken before the Tahua had consulted the gods. These priests demanded and decided the human sacrifices which the entire tribe accepted as homage to those who had created life. This was perhaps a terrible reward for those who had been chosen and were thus despatched to rejoin their happy fellows in the sky. The Tahua was attended by servants known as moa and was helped by the Tukuka Ooko, the priest in charge of the rites and of instruction in the songs, legends and genealogies. The Tukuku Ooko was surrounded by pupils from whom the Tahua chose his successor before he died. The Tahua was the one in whom the God resided and consequently he could be man or woman, of noble birth or of the people.

These "medicine men" were individuals possessing an extraordinary sensitivity, the fantastic powers of the medium and of premonition. When the God entered him, the Tahua began to quake violently and his face was distorted under the possession. The people, thus warned of the Tahua's approaching trances, had to remain indoors, extinguish the fires, refrain from sexual intercourse and from using the scents they employed daily. By observing these rites, the population participated in the ecstasy of its high priest. Then the Tahua, armed with an iron wood stave, advanced like a

blind man through the valley, preceded by his servants who danced before him. He lay all night on the meae to allow the strength of the gods to flow into him. Upon recovering from his trance the Tahua dictated to his people the divine orders. His authority could only be of a divine nature and his person was sacred and inviolable.

Chiefs and priests were deified during their lifetime and sometimes after their death. The priest was a truly essential cell of life. The tribe could only live by its conviction that the progress of invisible things was understood and transformed on earth by the priest. The effort of the whites to exterminate these essential life elements has only succeeded in dissociating the native from his "life." It was vital for this small race, lost in the silence of the ocean, to preserve its notion of life within a rigid framework under pain of seeing it disintegrate and man delivered to the individualism of pride.

The tragic problem of the rapid depopulation of the archipelago arose immediately after contact with our civilisation which overthrew premises of life that had been established for hundreds of years.

That the interpretation of the oracles was sometimes purposely distorted by the priests we cannot doubt. But the result alone mattered and the social organisation of tribal life reveal here a rare success.

It is certain that the charm and the extraordinary gentleness which exist in the South Seas are survivals of a society established in a state of serenity. The word "savage" which entered our vocabulary at that period denoted *a priori* any race whose technical evolution was inferior to our own. These men were dubbed savages by the first conquistadors or by the first whaler crews. If words still have a meaning, "savage" is defined as "one who lives without social organisation." It seems to me that this was very much the reverse in the case of the men of the Tiki.



## THE FAITH OF THE TIKI

Being constrained to celibacy, the priests lived apart on a meae surmounted by a pyramid-shaped hut but which they alone had the right to build. Seceding from the tribe while continuing to guide it, they spent their days in meditation, supervising the oral teaching of the legends of which not a single word could be changed. They were guardians of the language.

Although the islanders had surgeons, bone-setters and very efficient herbalists they often had recourse to the Tahua who also acted as an exorciser. The causes of disease were at that time unknown. They appeared to be the price paid to the gods for breaking certain commandments and the Tahua alone could avert the evil. His social role was therefore reinforced by this power and any ban or tabu pronounced by the Tahua was religiously observed.

The tabu is the origin of the law. The tabu obviously dictated the essential rules of conduct for life. These are:

Respect for the father; interdiction of brutality and slander; marriages between brothers and sisters; adultery; respect for the stranger (who in accordance with the custom of the isles exchanges his name with a chief); respect for the head—the sacred possession of the individual.

They followed the course of nature, observing very closely the changes of the season. Thus certain fruit trees were tabu during certain periods of the year. Fishing was also tabu at certain periods for certain fish. Access to sacred precincts and contact with a woman during the period of menstruation were tabu. The tabu ruled the religious life as well as daily actions. It possessed the strength of divine law and its transcendental character protected it against all possibility of secret infringement. Breaking of the tabu was a serious offence because it pledged the life of the whole tribe, and was punishable by death.

At the summons of the chief the entire valley undertook large-scale fishing or the building of a new temple. It was all

done with great simplicity and joy for the whole community participated in these tasks. The women prepared the food; the old men gave the benefit of their advice and even the children made themselves useful. It was in this way that enormous quarried stones, each weighing more than a ton, could be brought down from the mountains or hoisted above the rocks. The abolition of these tabus in the islands has been a disinheritance and has rapidly brought about a startling degeneracy of the race. It has been rather ineffectually replaced today by fear of the gendarme. Cultivations have disappeared, buildings have collapsed, the valleys have been stripped of trees and dried up. Despair has assumed the regalia of power. Apart from this, how did these people envisage the problem of creation and death?

The first assumption, before any attempt is made to enter into the presumable mentality of these men, is that they have a completely different perception of life.

A common factor will be found in all races who have remained apart from the great religious trends of our hemisphere. These men never had any idea of the mortal sin which obviously creates and places the divinity on quite a different plane.

The man of the Tiki could never have accepted the inconceivable weight of original sin. For these races the true contact of man with his god could only begin with the sexual life which renders man responsible for the creation. Even today the child has remained a god.

Until the child has grasped all the facts of life and assumed full responsibility, how can he face his god? He is still part divine. In reverse he loses this divinity by dwelling on earth until the age when, beginning his life as a man, he embarks upon the path of death and then learns the divine laws which place upon him the whole responsibility for his sublimation or his downfall. This view of his departure from life taught him to be calm in the face of death since he himself knew



from his behaviour on earth whether he was going towards his god or to disintegration. The teaching was so complete that it left no place for the excuse of buying redemption. The man knew that on earth all pride was vanity. He could therefore, whatever his aptitude, his beauty or his strength, advance calmly towards death, which merely meant the life eternal.

The men of Tiki believed in the immortality of the soul which, after life, could return to earth to punish the evil doer. Death was neither the destruction of the individual himself nor even of his earthly value. This thought placed great obligations on the living in the form of burial rites and the offerings continued long after the death of the individual. Like the majority of the races in this world, the Tiki people believed in the divine trinity, the perfect triangle denoting the construction of the world, the figure three reunited as a unit.

The unity of the divine trinity was called: Te Uutoka, Te Uuhua, and Te Hitikaupeka, a trinity which is strangely reminiscent of the original one adopted by the Christians and is to be found everywhere from Chaldoea (Anu, Bel, Kea) to Easter Island (Hiva, Make, Tive).

Te Uutoka, the one who never descended to earth.

Te Uuhua, the one who descends to the earth.

Te Hitikaupeka always represented in the form of the bird which receives the spirit and carries it to God.

The perenniality of this belief stresses the common origin of the human race.

The creation myth of the men of Tiki introduces with a terrible sharpness of vision the idea of our presence on earth. Man is a stranger here. He knows that he comes from another world, a real world, which he calls Havaiki, and it is towards this world that all his efforts are directed. That world is heaven.

The Tiki islander caught in his statues this waiting attitude on the part of the man who is a stranger to this world.

He would never have dared to represent God in his own image. He knew that his presence on earth had transformed him but that in his celestial origin he was quite different.

He resembled the face of those Tikis we qualify as monsters and which are perhaps the true image of our preterrestrial life: the symbol of the embryo.

This image, or one curiously like it, will be found among all prehistoric peoples.

Could it be a prophecy of the life which science is about to offer us?

But this primitive idea of origin is obviously quite contrary to our religions which were created to comply with the mediocrity of our imagination and the facility of our logic.

In the image of this original trinity the men of the Tiki concretised on earth the shadow of the trinity incarnated in the triple-natured human being; the body (the carnal terrestrial envelope of life), the soul (the vital power which escapes but does not die at the last breath), and finally the double, the shadow of the perishable body which in the non-Christian world represents the origin of life: the twins.

This is once more the dream of the androgyne. The double comprises all the human qualities of the individual, giving him his personality which is eternal and transmitting it to his issue.

The soul of man travelled to Havaiki, the country of its origin, which was divided into six regions.

This return towards the realm of creation could not arouse any anxiety in the dying man. As opposed to our Roman Catholic religion which, in order to survive, has to maintain a veritable police formula—death divided into a terrifying hell and a lukewarm, emasculated paradise—the priests of the sun announced to men that the most terrible hell was only in the image of life upon earth.

## THE FAITH OF THE TIKI

The six regions of paradise were three celestial and three terrestrial, each representing a stage towards the final happy resting place. This succession formed a true circle of life in the beyond.

The three celestial regions succeeded each other in the following order: those of the air, the stars and the gods. In the sky of the gods were reunited the kings and the deified priests, men killed in battle, at sea, or by falling into an abyss; the priestesses and the bards; the lepers; barren women or those who died in childbirth, and finally those appointed as human sacrifices.

The lepers dwelt especially in that part of the sky where the sun set.

They never entertained, as in the religions of our civilisation, that idea of preventive detention known as purgatory. Man had chosen his eternal destiny on earth and it could not be changed.

Death was not an end, but a crossing. The double could return to earth to call to account for their actions those who during their life on earth had injured him.

Despite the apparently ingenuous aspect of this concept, one cannot deny the important discipline that it represented for the group. God—or the gods—gave the dead the power to return to earth to punish injustices and injuries.

This is the reason why for all these races night became the realm of ghosts and fear.

The night, realm of the moon, goddess of evil on the earth. Even today the men of the Tiki never sleep without a little lamp alight by their bedside. This flickering flame represents the spark of solar life which banishes the fear of ghosts. For this reason, too, families usually live in huge communal houses where its members take it in turn to keep the flame of life alive.

The sacred fire of the vestal virgins, the fire of the African villages, the camp fire of the Amazonian Indians, all accept

## IN SEARCH OF TIKI

that fire is the first testimony of the sun announcing the rebirth of man. For thousands of years certain races have never let this fire die. Its importance was so great in the archipelago that the queens bestowed upon one of their husbands the great honour of tending the divine fire. These men were called Tahu Auahi : the lighters of the fire.

## CHAPTER II

### *The Legend of the Forbidden Valleys*

RETURNING to Omoa we rowed hard without being able to outstrip the approaching tornado which burst as we rounded the promontory. Earlier, the crew had stood upright in the canoes, holding palm leaves with outstretched arms—a kind of jury sail which had set us sailing speedily down the coast before the wind. It made a wonderful sight.

Omoa Bay opened ahead of us through a veritable crystal screen, iridescent in the sunlight, revealing a spectacle of incomparable grandeur. Outlined against a sky of violet, the valley diaphanous in the sun which pierced the curtain of rain, appeared like a stage setting of constellations. A double rainbow spanned them, lit up from time to time by the lightning flashes which seemed to rend the enormous blocks of lava bristling with palms bent like manes of fire. Beneath the violence of the tornado, the opaque black sea was ruffled with a thousand stalagmites, fringed with sunlight.

I took my camera and filmed conscientiously even though the picture I was trying to capture could never revive this striking impression of another world.

That evening round the fire we should fall asleep listening to the storyteller. I had not very long to prepare for the big trip. I had made up my mind at all costs to reach the forbidden east coast. Since it seemed impossible to travel overland we would try by sea.

The great difficulty was to find men willing to accompany me. On the one hand it was a perilous undertaking—the seas

teemed with sharks—but above all, the islanders were afraid to return to the forbidden valleys. I knew too that the older men were opposed to a white man like myself discovering this last secret.

Thanks to Willy, our departure was finally fixed. Seven men would accompany me in two canoes.

The whole valley was in a turmoil on account of my departure. Every evening the villagers collected under the giant mangoes to sing the ancient rari, a strange melody which has echoed down the centuries. Late into the night we squatted round the fire, listening to the songs, accompanied by guitars extolling the charm of the islands.

It was decided that the canoes should land me if possible in Hanaoua bay and attempt to return a week later either to pick me up or to bring me provisions. Everything was ready but only good fortune would let us get through. We needed at least nine hours of rowing to round the north cape.

At two o'clock in the morning everybody had collected by the canoes. It was a bright night; the swell was very heavy and broke in phosphorescent bubbles on the mirror of the black sand beach.

Now the entire village was on the beach. Here and there groups of watching women rocked their children. Nothing could have been stranger than these figures draped in white tapa standing out like statues against the black glistening sand.

By the time we passed Hanavave Bay it was bathed in sunlight. Then Cape Tevai towered like an enormous citadel against the sky, a fantastic outcrop of basalt and white coral. Suddenly I understood why, apart from outriggers, no vessel dared approach the east coast. The cape, the last barrage against the wind, was rounded and we were in the midst of a raging sea with waves thirty feet high from the troughs to the crests.

We heard cries; the other canoe was sinking. Its crew,

## THE LEGEND OF THE FORBIDDEN VALLEYS

although struggling in the waves, managed to seize their canoe and with an incredibly skilful movement emptied it of its load and a great part of the water, and then climbed back!

The whole landscape seemed to be an enormous scree slope which had been toppled into the sea. Dominated by a huge curled lip of the volcano, it looked desolate, gloomy and hostile. Pau informed me that we were rounding the first of the seven sacred valleys. They are separated by vast spurs of lava, and join in a vast arena formed by the lava fringe of the crater.

Except at the head of the valleys, the vegetation had disappeared. Everywhere we could see huge herds of goats. The men pointed out a needle of lava on the edge of the crater. "There are many skulls there but it is tabu." I did not know then, but this was one of the places I was to visit.

The solitude was terrifying but fascinating. Tahua Eke, the last high priest of the sun, had chosen to spend his last moments of initiation there. There he waited for the dawn which, on the far horizon, was to give him the return of the sun.

And then, at last, before us lay the royal valley of Hanoaua, the Valley of Kings. It was spectacular, a valley of the most perfect proportions. Crowned with the waving plumes of coconut palms, the centre lip of the volcano revealed a gaping hole. It seemed to me to be like the eye of a colossal god eternally looking over the tombs of the valley. But the men of the island recalled that their fathers had christened it Te Vahine Naho, the Pass of Desire . . .

This desire was no longer that of men, but of the wind or of the last rays of the sun which glide towards it across the baked lava. Once, long ago, it must have directed its welcome to wearied men on their rafts.

A sudden, skilful gesture on the part of the tillerman and the bows of our canoe pointed at the foaming, pebbled beach.

A mighty wave submerged us and flung us on the wild scree shore. We were safe.

Some of the men left immediately for the valley to pick wild oranges; others cut palm branches to build our fare. And now the fire blazed cheerfully. Goat chops were grilling as we ate our popoi. Our dogs sniffed the tracks of wild boar.

As soon as the sun slipped behind the great cliff the men went to the spring which gushed from its side and bathed and scrubbed their skins with black polished sand.

That night, close together in the hut, rolled in our blankets, we waited for the stars. One by one cigarettes were lit. It was the starry hour when the storyteller began his tale.

"There are leagues and leagues before my memory can discover the name of my ancestors . . ."

With half-closed eyes, spinning a web of myth, he guided them along the long, mythical journey of the legend of Koomahu.

One day Koomahu went out fishing for bonitos and returned with his canoe so heavily laden that he said to his sister Tahia: "Go and distribute this fish among the people of the valley." Tahia took the fish and distributed the catch, going from hut to hut. On the path she met a beautiful white bird which flew around her. She did not know this bird and wanted to catch it.

The bird came from the sky and was at the same time bait on a hook belonging to old Tapauifenua. Every day the old man sent the bird, with baited hook, to earth to bring him back his food. As Tahia tried to seize it, she was caught on the hook and carried away to Havaiki.

Her blood had spurted onto her brother's chest and Koomahu cried: "My sister has been carried off into the sky."

Koomahu said: "May my sister become so lean that the old man will not eat her," and at the same moment the girl became as thin as a skeleton. Tapauifenua was blind and



## THE LEGEND OF THE FORBIDDEN VALLEYS

could never see his victims. So when Tahia was deposited at his feet, he approached and felt her with his hands.

Seeing how thin she was, the old man said: "We'll put her in a net and hang her outside the hut; then we'll feed her up before eating her."

In the meantime Koomahu thought out every method of saving Tahia. He decided to go and see his parents who said to him: "Go and see Tetoï."

Koomahu did as he was bid. "I want to go to the sky to save my sister," he said. And Tetoï replied: "I don't think we can manage it, but climb on my shoulders. I'll say the word."

And Koomahu grew taller and taller until he was thirty feet high.

But Tetoï said: "I can't do any more. Go and see Upoaïai." Koomahu did as he was bid and Upoaïai ordered: "Climb on my shoulders. I'll say the word."

And Koomahu began to grow taller and taller until he reached the height of a hundred feet.

Then Upoaïai said: "I can't do any more. Go and see Matuanuue." And Koomahu did as he was bid and said: "I want to go to the sky to save my sister."

And Matuanuue ordered: "Take the canoe, climb up the mast and I'll say the word." The mast rose and rose. Then Koomahu asked: "Where is the entrance to the sky?"

Matuanuue replied: "You see that swaying fern. Count seven and then catch hold of it because it's Huumaitoïto's beard."

Koomahu rocked the boat seven times and seizing the fern, climbed up the beard of Huumaitoïto who cried: "What dog is playing with my beard?"

"Koomahu is a man and not a dog," the intruder replied. And he climbed on to the head which reached the sky. Then Huumaitoïto asked: "How can a man reach the upper heaven?"

## IN SEARCH OF TIKI

"Because I am Koomahu."

"Why have you come?"

"I have come in search of my sister."

Then Huumaitoito said to him. "Go, Koomahu the brave, you will find Tahia hanging in the house of Tapauifenua."

Koomahu walked along the sky and finally met an old woman lying across his path. He stopped. "Who are you?" he asked.

"I am Hinamoheanui," replied the old woman. "You can climb over my body but beware of the hook, the stone and the arrow of Tapauifenua."

Koomahu continued resolutely on his way until he came to the house of Tapauifenua. He approached and immediately saw his sister hanging in the net and the great roaring oven near which the blind man was sitting. Without a sound Koomahu took a piece of igname, bananas, chestnuts, a little popoi and a gourd of water and gave them to his sister.

In the meantime the two old women who served the blind man had gone in search of wood and buorao leaves for the big oven where Tahia was to be roasted that very day.

Worried by the noise he had heard, the blind man stood up and went over to check that his meal was still there.

Then, seeing that many things were missing, he said: "Ah, there must have been a thief here." And he took up his stone.

The blind man suddenly flung his stone which Koomahu only just avoided. It continued on its way to Fitinui and returned to the hand of the thrower.

Hearing no sound from his prey, Tapauifenua took up his arrow.

On seeing this Koomahu hid himself and the arrow sped to Fitinui and back.

The blind man, still not hearing his prey, took his hook and cast it.

The bird-baited hook flew as far as Fitinui but on its return

## THE LEGEND OF THE FORBIDDEN VALLEYS

it stuck in the body of Hinamoheanui so that she cried out and Koomahu ran to her aid.

He rapidly released the hook and hung a lizard on it. The old man who was pulling on the line felt that it was now quite slack and withdrew it. Running his hands over it, he took off the lizard.

Intrigued, the blind man smelt the hook and noticed an odour of human blood. Then he said to himself. "I have let a human escape."

Koomahu then rushed onto his head and said: "Yes, yes, Koomahu is a man." And the blind man replied: "How have you managed to reach the upper sky?"

"Because I am Koomahu."

"Then let me see the daylight," said the old man, "and I will say that you are Koomahu."

Then Koomahu pulled down the top of an old coconut palm and picked one of the nuts. Breaking it, he took the coconut milk and with the tip of his fingers threw the drops into the right eye of the blind man, saying: "Behold the light." And the blind man saw the sun.

"Continue," said Tapauifenua. "I still have one blind eye."

But Koomahu asked the old man: "Tapauifenua, why did you nearly eat my sister?"

"I did not know she was your sister, and now the two old women will come back and kill Tahia, your sister."

Koomahu hid and a few moments later the two sorceresses appeared.

Quite unsuspectingly they began to stoke the oven and were about to unhook the net.

At this moment Tapauifenua said to them. "Wait! The oven is not hot enough."

The old women heated the stones until they became white hot and said: "It is ready." "Yes," said Tapauifenua, "but

spread out all the stones and put bourao leaves on top." At the same moment he beckoned to Koomahu to kill them.

Koomahu drew near and while the two old women were bending over their oven, he smote them with his club, so that they fell into the fire. Then he covered them with earth and when they were well cooked Koomahu, Tahia and the old man proceeded to eat them.

When the meal was over Tapauifenua said to them. "Now go and bathe in the river of Vai papuaono."

Koohamu and his sister refreshed themselves in the stream and when Koohamu bathed the water flashed with lightning.

Wearied after the bathe, Koomahu and his sister decided to return to earth. On their way they visited the blind man who said to them: "Wait for darkness for then will come the seven wives of Vapa-Ite-Toua" (He who likes to glide over the waves).

Every night the seven wives came to sleep with the blind man and at the break of day returned to Matafenua point.

So Koomahu waited for nightfall and when the stars pierced the clouds, he saw the wives of Vapa-Ite-Toua appear one by one on a little eminence.

When the first one reached the summit, she stopped and said: "I am Hina Hoo who comes at twilight. I am the woman from the shores of the Papanui sea, the woman who sleeps with Taitetoua." And each of them said the same thing as they arrived on the hill. In this way they divided the night into seven phases from sunset to dawn.

Koomahu was stupefied by all these women and upon seeing this Tapauifenua said: "You can't take them all but if that is your desire, take the one who appears at daybreak."

When the first wife of Vapa-Ite-Toua arrived at the house she said: "It smells of man." And the blind man asked: "How do you expect a man to reach the upper sky?" The woman replied: "In my mind's eye I can see the beauty of

## THE LEGEND OF THE FORBIDDEN VALLEYS

this man." And each woman as she reached the house said the same thing, entered, retired to bed and snored.

At last day broke and when the last woman appeared on the hill Tapauifenua said to Koomahu: "You can have that one."

Koomahu then seized the woman, who cried: "Leave me, for you are a god and I am human."

And Koomahu replied: "Know that you are the god and I am the earth!"

But the woman denied this and the noise of her words woke the others who fled down the hill.

When they met again they spoke among themselves: "Mark well the beauty of that man for day is breaking."

On seeing this the blind man said to Koomahu: "You and Tahia go and bathe now and put on your finery and prepare for your return to earth."

When Koomahu plunged into the stream once more there were flashes of lightning and all the women watching were seized with admiration and regretted that he had not possessed them—except the last one who did not dare to say anything.

After their bathe Koomahu and Tahia set out for earth but on the way Tahia suddenly grew frightened and said to her brother, "We have forgotten something."

"What?" asked Koomahu. "The stone," replied his sister. "The old man may use it, again."

Then Koomahu returned to the blind man and said: "I Koomahu, the handsome youth, with the large, large eyes;

"I demand the long line;

"I demand the short line;

"I have bathed in the waters of Pakua Hone;

"I demand the stone that is hurled."

On hearing this the old man gave him the stone.

Koomahu returned to his sister, who said immediately: "I am afraid, go and fetch the arrow."

Koomahu then returned to the house of Tapauifenua, made

a similar demand, and the old man gave him the arrow. As he returned once more to Tahia she said hurriedly: "I am afraid for we have forgotten the bird-baited hook which could recapture me."

And Koomahu returned once more to the blind man with a similar demand.

Then Tapauifenua replied: "I have given you everything I possessed and now I give you the bird-baited hook."

Then Koomahu returned to his sister and having placed the hook, the arrow and the stone in a basket they set out on their way back to earth.

On the way back they met the old woman who was still lying across the road. As soon as she saw them coming she said: "Take me with you because I want to return on earth." Koomahu agreed.

The path led them to the place from which Koomahu had set out but, alas, the boat had gone.

"We shall have to jump," said Koomahu, and he asked the old woman to lead the way.

The old woman jumped and disappeared in the sea where the fish Patue ate her. Furious at this, Koomahu ordered the fish to return the old woman.

The Patue blew with all his might and the old woman was hurled into the air but fell back into the sea where another fish swallowed her, and this continued with every fish in the sea.

Koomahu, who had grown tired of this, said to Tahia: "Jump and let us leave the old woman." In this way Koomahu and Tahia arrived on the beach soon after the old woman who, tired of being swallowed by all the fishes, had fallen asleep on the beach.

In the valley there were two chiefs—Koomahu and Fata. Fata, who had just finished carving his club, was going with his warriors to christen it on the beach, for it needed soaking in the sea and to be struck on the rocks.

## THE LEGEND OF THE FORBIDDEN VALLEYS

When they arrived on the beach they caught sight of the old woman asleep and tried out the cudgel on her head. It killed her.

The blood spurted on to Koomahu's chest and now he knew what had happened.

Then he planted the war stave. On seeing this Fata's warriors also planted the emblem of battle.

The war began.

When Koomahu captured an enemy he did not kill him, while Fata's men killed everyone they took.

Finally all Fata's men were Koomahu's prisoners. Fata and his six remaining warriors fled into the mountains.

There was no food among the rocks until one day Fata discovered two cocks which crowed every morning, and, in the valley, Koomahu heard the crowing of the cocks.

Each night Fata's two sons descended into the valley to try and procure food from their Fetti (relations and friends).

Koomahu said to his men: "Tell Fata's brothers that I want to see them."

Although they were afraid they obeyed his orders.

"What are those birds which sing every morning and at whose third cry the dawn breaks?" asked Koomahu.

"They are cocks," was the reply.

Then Koomahu said: "Bring me those two cocks and tell Fata that he and his men can return and live in the valley and that their possessions have been respected."

And Fata returned and surrendered the birds which were called cocks.

On learning this Putauau, another of Koomahu's sisters, asked if she could raise cocks.

"No," said Koomahu, "but I will give you the chicks. Leave the cocks in my valley."

But when Putauau insisted, Koomahu gave them to her and told her to tend them well.

And Putauau began to raise cocks, taking great care

with their food. From time to time Koomahu visited his sister and found that the barnyard was flourishing.

The brood now numbered two hundred.

On his next visit some months later, Koomahu found that the number of birds had not increased. He said to his sister: "Why have you eaten these birds' young?"

Putauau and her brother Naha replied: "It is not true." But two of Koomahu's men had seen them eating the eggs.

Furious at this lie, Koomahu released all the birds known as cocks and that is why this bird is now to be found in all the islands.

\* \* \*

Not until sleep had taken his audience one by one did the storyteller end his tale and lie down to dream with his hand on his temples. I remained awake for a long time, as though a prey to some vague desire. I was there at the foot of this forbidden world. Far away in my country it was day with its wonted turmoil.

What could I write? I could only make a vain attempt in words to express this feeling of emptiness, happiness and fear.

At my side men were sleeping the untroubled sleep of children. I went on smoking . . . and waited for the dawn.

It was there, hardly visible, but already tangible in its splendour. My companions woke up and smiled without a word.

While some of them descended to the stream, others kindled the fire or made ready the canoes. They were put to sea before sunrise but it was still the calm of the night.

Gently the canoes slipped beneath the shelter of a rock, then holding the craft steady my companions flung themselves into the waves. They were away. If the wind allowed they would return in the moon's first quarter and, if the sea allowed, they would sleep that evening on the beach at Omoa.



## CHAPTER 12

### *The Valley of Death*

I WAS with my two men and three dogs when I first saw Hananoua. On one side was the sea, on the other the valley which, in its great lava fold, seemed like the prolongation of an enormous wave. I stared at it as I had once stared at the mass of Tumuc-Humac, towering above the Amazonian forests. The men of Hanavave used to say: "It is the valley of death."

I saw it now encased within its immense frowning cliffs, scarred and sombre with its lava crater overhead allowing the sun with its last rays to light up the Pass of Desire. Like the shadow of clouds chased by the wind, the flight of the frigate birds was projected black on the far slope of the cliffs. There was no sound save for the occasional song of the wind playing the fine branches of the iron-wood trees on top of the ridge.

The arrangements for the camp were soon completed and my two companions Pau and Kumati decided to leave with the dogs to catch some wild pigs. This would supply us with food for several days.

During their absence I tried to carry out a preliminary reconnaissance of the valley. I must admit that I hesitated, so impressive was the setting and so convinced was I of the extraordinary treasure concealed by those lava walls. According to the observations I had made in the other islands, the Tiki men buried their dead in the cliff walls. Here, however, were only two long lava outflows falling down on either side

of the valley. I could soon see that there was no trace of burial grounds up there. Even had they ever existed they would have disappeared, washed away by the terrible tidal waves which every thirty years ravage the isles and in particular the atolls. This is the reason why no expedition had been able to find any trace of ancient burials on these low-lying islands.

I decided to enter the dense, luxuriant burial corridor which begins some yards from the beach. I immediately came upon three tombs carved in the red stone and arranged exactly like mehirs. Only one was intact, the others having been uprooted and broken by the waves. On a light foundation of pebbles the flagstones were carefully joined but bore neither carving nor pictograms. Through the fissures in the entrance I caught sight of bones. Apart from an almost intact skull the bones were in the last stages of decomposition. They had been dissolved by contact with the earth and the water which at the least high tide must have swamped the cave. It was in any case the first time on the islands that I had discovered these ground level burial places.

There was no doubt that these tombs had undergone Christian influence, that is to say, were not much earlier than the twentieth century. Later, the systematic excavations I carried out in these tombs confirmed this. Not only did we never find any ancient artefacts even of ivory, but we discovered certain trash which enabled me to date the coffins accurately. I noted furthermore that these tombs did not respect the solar orbit whereas all the ancient coffins I was to discover later were scrupulously orientated.

At the very entrance to the forest I was impressed by the spectacle it afforded. Everywhere there were huge piles of stones, superimposed flagstones, high paepae, eroded, smashed and overturned by the forest. Bathed in the diaphanous light of the undergrowth were the fantastic works of men who had turned the valley topsy turvy by erecting a

## THE VALLEY OF DEATH

royal avenue of tombs climbing up towards the crater. I could already foresee the enormous difficulty we should have in clearing the terrain and trying to draw a plan of the buildings.

In the distance I could hear the cries of the hunters who had discovered a herd of goats. I had to return to the camp to light the fires. On leaving the entrance to the forest I noticed that I was following a veritable Roman road, paved with flagstones. It was no less than twelve feet broad and flanked in parts by small walls. When the vegetation petered out near the sea I noticed that about every ten yards the alley was cut transversely by a stone canal which served to lead off the waters and to protect the building against being washed away in the heavy rains. I had already noticed elsewhere this ingenious system which explains why these paving stones are still almost intact. The route led to the edge of the beach.

I caught sight of Pau and Kumati, running down the hill, each carrying a goat on their shoulders. Leaping from rock to rock they arrived on the reef within a few minutes. In the distance the setting sun seemed to be searching for a last rift in the heavy mantle of clouds which had descended on the island. The calm hour descended gently upon the valleys. The fire was soon blazing. We covered it with a mixture of seaweed and sweet smelling herbs which gave off a heavy column of smoke to keep off the midges and the moths.

Pau and Kumati, squatting at the edge of the reef, were cutting up their game, surrounded by the dogs which watched intently. Suddenly I heard an enormous splash and was just in time to see the fin of a shark disappear while others swam up from all sides attracted by the blood. My companions carried on unperturbed.

Around them the dogs barked furiously. When they had finished cutting up the game, Pau called me for the sight was worth seeing. Kumati seized all the intestines and flung

them to the edge of the reef ; there was a mad rush, the water seethed under the shock of the monsters' fins as they leaped above the surface. Armed with his harpoon Pau stabbed in all directions and suddenly there was a hideous rush for a shark which was losing its blood. The creatures tore each other to pieces with unimaginable fury ; the jackal of the sea lived up to its reputation.

Pau and Kumati smiled.

The dying day tinged the valley. The moon could be seen in the east. This was the hour for the last ablutions in the stream at the foot of the cliff — the evening bathe which relaxes the muscles after effort and encourages reverie. Frigate birds and terns whirled over the forest, climbing slowly to their nests in the horseshoe of cliffs. Despite the storm which was heralded over the summits it was outlined erect as though barring the passage to the west where the sun disappeared in all its splendour.

In the wall the Pass of Desire still gleamed. The last glance of the one who was the god and directed the island adventure. Huddled round the fire, we ate in silence. Pau stared up at the Southern Cross which had appeared between two masses of cumulus.

The dogs after eating their fill had fallen asleep with their ears cocked.

Before retiring to rest, Pau placed a lump of sandalwood on the embers and the musky odour seeped into the fare.

*I-Teie-Po.* It is night.

The little petrol lamp standing in the corner lit up the hut faintly, making the shadows of the leave trellis flicker. It would burn all night to chase away spirits.

For a long time Pau and Kumati spoke of their hunt. They had seen herds of more than a hundred goats and had decided that next day they would surround them with the dogs and take some of them alive.

These herds are a great problem. The natives have never

## THE VALLEY OF DEATH

tried to domesticate them and on the other hand the small number of inhabitants and the difficulty of procuring guns make it almost impossible to keep down this terrible scourge. One only has to see the difference between the inhabited west coast and the deserted east coast. Everything has been devoured down to the roots of the trees which the persistent erosion have bared.

The introduction of goats only goes back to the second half of the nineteenth century. It is an amusing story. Two missionaries who, with their abominable mania of not only wishing to impose their ethics all over the world but also of recreating their own little universe, imported a couple of goats to obtain a little milk. Unfortunately they could not convert their pets to chastity and a few months later there were a host of kids.

The administrator encouraged this initiative. There was milk for the missionaries and the subject for a fine sermon on the future raising of these unfortunate savages' standard of life. The administrator returned to his French Puddle-combe-on-the-Mud. The priests had their café au lait at the other end of the world but the great forests disappeared from the island, usurped by Madam Nanny Goat. Now the goats are a pest, eating everything that grows.

It was Kumati's turn to speak that night and he told the story of the brother and sister who left home for a strange country because their parents were always scolding the son. After many journeys, the brother met his death and the sister, distraught, returned with his head to the grief-stricken parents.

\* \* \*

Our working plan was the same every day: breaking camp at half past five to return at two o'clock in the afternoon, the midday meal, resting, hunting and for myself the compilation of my notes until sunset.

We left on our first reconnaissance of the foot of the lava crater. Distributed among three our equipment was a trifle restricted: gun, axe, machete, nylon rope and my Rolleiflex camera.

We were immediately swallowed up by the lianas. Still shackled by piles of rock, the twisted vegetation allowed isolated sunbeams to trickle through and illuminate the stone terraces. Here and there bright-coloured wild oranges relieved the emerald green of the forest.

A few minutes sufficed for me to grasp the vastness of the site. Following the bends of the old stream, the numerous buildings were staggered and terraced, surpassing in grandeur anything that I could have imagined in this sacred valley. I immediately realised that I could not carry out the necessary excavations because we were too small a team.

Progress was comparatively easy. We only had to follow the paved avenue, which has remained almost intact. It meandered through the forest flanked on both sides by buildings. One thing struck me at once: there were practically no traces of habitation. Nothing but terraces, graveyards, pig pens (these animals were raised for the initiation ceremonies and the sacrifices), assembly places, tall cubic paepae on which were placed the canoe coffins and occasionally the pyramidal hut of a Tahua. The arrangement of the tombs and the paepae rigidly followed the course of a dried-up stream. Its flow must have been very great judging by the depth of the bed and the corrosion of the rocks.

The progressive drying up of the streams on the east coast was the disaster which chased these peoples from their original settlement. The trace of this life-giving stream in the shade of the forest only adds to the infinite sadness which has descended on the valley of the dead. To the right, quite intact, rose the two tall paepae which in view of the number of skeletons piled there seemed to have been ossuaries. We contented ourselves with looking and not touching. It would

## THE VALLEY OF DEATH

have been an act of vandalism to disturb this ensemble. Nevertheless some years ago a government agent had all the paepae of the island of Hivaoa blasted open because they were supposed to contain great wealth.

The further we advanced up the valley, the more the architecture took on the form of a giant cemetery in which today nothing remained but a few tombs. Flanking the stream rose huge walls through which the forest forced its way, enveloping them and giving them the appearance of deserted ruined castles. The paved road suddenly ended at the foot of one of the walls. It became a staircase leading to a tiled belvedere overlooking a mountain stream.

The torrent forked round a kind of rostrum, a stone prow formed of enormous assembled monoliths. Dominated and enchained by the tentacle roots of the banyans, they stood like a shadowy cathedral in midstream.

Broken only by the barking of dogs on the scent of wild pigs, an immense silence lay over the valley. We slipped down into the stream and had soon hoisted ourselves on to the spur in the banyan grove. The impression afforded by these trees is certainly one of the most curious phenomena of the islands. They let fall a rain of roots which gradually reach the ground, progressively raising the actual tree; it is suspended above a vault of perpendicular roots, allowing the sunlight to trickle through it as though it were a living stained glass window.

The banyan is considered in the islands as the tree of the priests. Its bark served to make the priestly tapa and wherever it was planted denoted a sacred spot, more especially a place of burial. There was no doubt that we had entered one of the most important sites of the island.

We advanced very slowly, finding difficulty in making out the constructions, because vegetation had wreaked havoc with them since they were abandoned.

Beneath the top soil, however, we could distinguish a



succession of small collapsed terraces. They rose in steps to a huge platform which broadened out.

This ensemble was so important that for the moment I decided not to prospect here any further but to make our way further up stream. Two streams, in fact, converged at this point, each cutting its way through cliffs which reached down to the left and right of the crater. We took the left fork. The higher we advanced the more dense became the forest. There was no further trace of building. We were now in a narrow corridor in which majestic tree ferns and giant hape flourished.

The head waters of the spring seeped through overturned blocks, giving the forest a marvellous luxuriance.

In this way we arrived almost at the foot of the big cliff from which a waterfall gushed, evaporating in spray before reaching the split in the two close-set walls below. It was a beautiful sight as it fell down the giddy lava slope from the crater.

It was impossible to make out the least detail of the walls which enclosed it because the forest was so dense. We could just distinguish above our heads the outline of the cliffs against the sky. It was almost nightfall and we had to turn back.

Next morning we continued our exploration. This time we had to reconnoitre the right branch of the stream. Thus we were back once more at the point of confluence below the great banyan grove. The sun streamed so brightly through the shade that the trellis of roots was outlined beneath a coverlet of lianas. We entered the maze.

Enormous carved flagstones had been overturned, gripped by the roots. A gigantic banyan seemed to have hollowed out the stone foundations and raised them to resemble a crypt.

We advanced through the pillars of the roots, the main trunk supported some thirty feet above our heads.

We progressed slowly hacking our way through the grove.



## THE VALLEY OF DEATH

It was paved throughout until we stumbled across a slight excavation full of top soil, from which emerged a number of bones.

We cleared it swiftly: there were several skulls, two of which were almost intact.

It was almost certain that we had hit upon a sacrificial site. We decided to clear the surroundings and examine the spot more closely. We were on a terrace flanked by the two streams.

On a light bed of square stone covered with lianas we discovered the remains of three huge drums. They were in a state of decay but the bases were still intact and we could easily reconstruct them. The largest was about six feet high and four feet across.

It is not difficult to imagine the power of this extraordinary drum stretched with sharkskin: its echo would be heard for five miles around. These were the drums which the terrified first discoverers heard summoning the warriors and telling them of the arrival of the whiteskins. These were the drums which, beneath the fingers of the priests, summoned the islanders to the ceremony of the sun or drowned the last cries of those who were to be offered as a sacrifice.

According to an ancient legend, I learned that there were seven drums on this meae. They were supposed to have been intact until fifty years ago.

Alas I only discovered the remains of three which were rotting away in the humus. It was, however, an important find, because not a single intact drum has survived in the whole group of islands.

And with these instruments the ancient music of the islanders disappeared to be replaced by the recently imported guitar—the only melody that the chaste ears of our bogus moralists can tolerate.

Accompanying the drums, of which there were five different types, was the toere, which is still used today. This is a

hollow tube with a longitudinal split which the musician strikes with a wooden stick. They also used the Pahu-Kou-Hau which can be compared with a xylophone of three notes.

The wind instruments were represented by the marine conch, still used by the fishermen, the three-stopped flute, and the vivo, a seven-reeded Pan pipe, an instrument which has recently disappeared, but of which Paul Gauguin still heard the echoes.

This description is certainly restricted, when one tries to conjure up the assemblies where the entire race participated in the spell-binding summons of the drums, for there can be no doubt as to the splendour of these songs of which modern Polynesian music, although marvellous enough, is but a pale reflection.

We searched round the remains of the drums to find the drumsticks which I know were carved from pieces of human bone, engraved with the image of the Tiki. Unfortunately we found no trace of them. To have located the position of the drums helped us considerably, for the orchestra was always placed opposite the sacrificial stone. Very soon, however, I discovered an ossuary containing several skulls. To one side lay two broken conches which in the old days were reserved for the chiefs. Although these instruments were tabu I was not surprised to find them here. They were two enormous shells, far larger than those used today by the fishermen.

While I was examining the bones, Pau slipped into the centre of the tree and called out suddenly. "hai mai!" I joined him immediately to be faced with a terrifying scene. The centre of the banyan was exactly in the middle of the place of sacrifice. As the tree had grown it had gradually crushed and engulfed the skulls and bones and worked them into its bark so that now they were above ground, part of the living tree. The haggard eyes of the skulls were looking down in horror on the scene: it was a diabolical sight,



This strange object, at first glance like an enormous spanner, is a stone guillotine

Here is a head in position. It was cut off either with an axe or a sharpened bamboo sword





The astonishing giant Tiki heads

A grey lava Tiki. One can only be spellbound at the purity of this statue from the other end of the world. It might have been carved at the foot of the Nile obelisks





A graveyard of human sacrifices within a huge banyan



Coffin-canoes in their burial place in the cliffs, invariably well hidden and almost inaccessible. In the top right-hand corner of the picture is a skull wrapped in tapa



## THE VALLEY OF DEATH

for in the greenish light the skulls stood out luminous and terrible in the deathly silence. The tree was a vault. The bark of all its surrounding columns was inlaid with human ivory.

A wooden Tiki was staked in the centre of the ossuary but although badly decayed its head, apart from the mouth, was almost intact. The head, enormous in proportion to the body, had been carved like a caryatid from a slender miro trunk. On his worm-eaten body, the gigantic chief wore a strange helmet: the two long ears, descending to the shoulders, ended in devil's horns

On the mutilated face the two eye sockets stared in an ecstasy of horror. Enveloped in the shadows of his pagan cathedral the sun god still kept watch over the grim testament of those who died here to the dread beating of the sacrificial drums in the Valley of Death.

## CHAPTER 13

### *Cannibalism and Torture*

I CANNOT refrain at this juncture from discussing the problem of anthropophagy—a repulsive word, however it may be explained—meaning cannibalism, or the eating of man by man. According to this definition it has been established that it existed in the Tiki archipelago as it existed elsewhere in the world.

There is no reason to try and find excuses but rather to discover the reason which led man to feed upon the flesh of his kin. The fact is there and it is still very close to us. Europe only ceased to be cannibalistic after the Gallic era, disregarding of course certain limited cases in concentration camps. One thing is certain, anthropophagy tends to disappear when man ceases to be nomadic and when scientific evolution improves his living conditions.

Before trying to analyse the case of the islands we must understand the problem of four aspects which would seem to account for its origin and survival. The first, which *a priori* seems to explain the origin of cannibalism, is when man despite his repugnance found himself forced to eat his fellows.

By a very recent example on the raft *Medusa* we are forced to accept this last action of self-preservation.

It is probable that cannibalism started in limited cases of famine. For the men of Tiki who crossed the sea on their rafts, it is conceivable that in default of other provisions, the survivors were forced to practice necrophagy. This practice led to a desire and then a pathological taste for human flesh.

This brings us to the second aspect of anthropophagy, i.e.



the desire to eat human flesh even when other nourishment is available.

It is an interesting point that the races among which cannibalism was practised most extensively were those possessing sufficient food. The first taste of human flesh may have been transformed into a desire, and the Arabian writer Abd-Allatifi, describing the terrible famine which ravaged Egypt in 1200, writes:

"Cannibalism appeared in various places, arousing reprobation and horror but gradually obtaining a hold in the city.

"Human flesh was sold and cooked openly and long after the famine the rich still hired assassins to procure for their table a food for which they had conceived a taste they could no longer dispense with."

From this habit it is a short step to pathological cannibalism which although limited has been amply corroborated. Without lingering on cases of "unwitting cannibalism," I now come to a phenomenon which appears to me of greater interest: accepted and deliberate anthropophagy, limited to very well-defined rites.

In his essays, Montaigne exposes the possibility of a certain type of society sacrificing a few individuals for the welfare of the tribe. "It is less barbarous to cook a man and eat him when he is dead than to torture him while he is alive." It is in this form that cannibalism practised by the Celts seems to have been established among the men of the Tiki. It is no longer actual cannibalism for it is combined with human sacrifice in the nature of a rite: (1) war-like, to appropriate the virtues of the dead man (we find this survival in the exchange of blood, an inviolable pact); (2) funereal, like a last communion before the ultimate separation or medicinal in a desire to appropriate the blood of the strong—this rite was preserved by the Romans who paid high prices to drink the blood of the gladiators; (3) as an expression of total vengeance, by obliterating the insult for ever; (4) purely and simply as a religious

rite. This is precisely how the people of the Tiki, like so many other races, came to accept it.

The blood offering was, and still is, practised today as one of the purest forms of the desire for communion with the deity. It is certain that by choosing the most highly developed animal, man paid the deity his most precious homage, a supreme offering since he went so far as to choose the blood of virgins. This does not explain, however, that human sacrifice can be reinforced by cannibalism.

The rite of communion existed with the intent that man by eating the flesh of the victim identified himself with it in the hope that it would intercede for him with the god.

This rite of communion fortunately limits anthropophagy which in the Tiki islands was almost exclusively practised by the priests. By this dual personality they imagined that they were getting into the closest contact with their god.

There is concrete evidence to show the importance attached to the ceremonial. Men alone, and then only certain privileged persons, were admitted to these feasts. Women and children, who could not enter into contact with the divinity but had to obey orders, were excluded.

It is almost certain that the men, by excluding the women and children, showed a certain repugnance for the actions they committed.

At these feasts only the chief, the priests, the elders and the head warrior were admitted. The people only took part very rarely.

The eye was reserved for the king. The priests, the elders and the head warrior then shared the brains, the liver and the heart. The rest of the body was distributed among the other warriors.

It is unfortunately evident that wars and famines sometimes caused this religious principle to degenerate into a hideous debauch.

Although the last case of cannibalism in the islands was

reported at the end of the nineteenth century, the importance of this must not be exaggerated.

Too many travellers' tales tend to make the reader believe that human flesh was a daily diet. It was in fact exceedingly limited.

And before hurling an anathema let us remember our own religious and the more recent nationalist wars, and not forget that our ancestors intoxicated themselves on the blood of victims devoured in the arena; that our great-grandfathers watched victims hung, drawn and quartered, and burned alive after torture; that our fathers crowded behind 'cordons of police to see the guillotine at work; and that our generation tolerates massacres and enjoys reading about them.

If human sacrifice had been a daily occurrence on the island, how was it that when Cook discovered the group he found a population of a hundred thousand souls and that after more than a century of civilisation only 3,600 remain?

The victims of these sacrificial rites were of three kinds: those captured in war and immolated on the death of the chief; those who had seriously infringed the tabu thus compromising the future of the tribe; and, finally, selected or voluntary victims representing the tribe's supreme adoration of its god.

Human sacrifice was regulated by a strict ceremonial, the sole decision remaining with the Tahuas who, unfortunately, as the result of this arbitrary power, could dispose of the lives of others.

At the behest of the Tahua, the warriors set out in search of victims, trying to carry them off by surprise from enemy tribes. These victims of vengeance were abominably ill-treated and were submitted to acts of monstrous cruelty.

As soon as they were captured they had their arms and legs broken with clubs so that they could not flee and, for convenience sake, were bound to a pole and brought back to the village. Here they were exposed for several days on the tohua,

impaled on a thorny branch only removed on the day of their final agony and tearing out their vitals.

The tortured victim remained in this way exposed to the population for several days, but strangely enough in the midst of so much cruelty, his mother or wife, protected by the tabu, could visit him. She had to appear naked, her face covered with crosses drawn in charcoal.

When the day of sacrifice arrived, the priest, after thrice invoking the trinity, intoned the anthem of the dead before the assembled tribe and began to cut the victim to pieces alive with a bamboo knife. This was the least of his tortures, for sometimes after tearing out his eyes and skinning him, he had mother of pearl hooks plunged into his nose, lips and ears. After attaching these to cords, the unfortunate man was buried in the sand, surrounded by fires which heated the cangue, allowing him to be slowly roasted to death.

There were many other refinements which were so ignoble that I hesitate to record them.

The victims chosen among the tribe for the rite of communion were, if I may say so, treated better. After being exposed on the altar of the god for several days before the sacrifice, they were finally laid on a small special paepae. The Tuhaka Ooko then intoned the sacrificial hymn which the crowd accompanied with hand clapping.

At the end of each couplet the victim had to undergo several manipulations.

A hook passed through the mouth and coming out of the chin was suddenly withdrawn abruptly and he was allowed to fall back.

The priest then tore out his eyes and ate them.

After this, before crushing him to death on the altar stone, the priest intoned the last couplet of the song of the dead which ended as follows:

Begone on the sea to Havaiki!  
Go without a single desire!

Your father weeps, my child.  
Your family mourns the separation.  
Begone across the sea to Havaiki!

Although it revolts me to deal with this subject, I could not dismiss this particular custom, but its results have been considerably exaggerated by the first western historians.

In view of the restricted number of sacrificial sites I was able to discover that these rites may have been performed with repugnance. Reserved to a very small caste, which had certainly perverted them from their original aim, the human sacrifice was originally a rite of communion with the divinity who had led the people of Tiki to the shores of the archipelago and demanded from initiated priests this osmosis with the supernatural powers.

In any case we can congratulate ourselves on having abolished these rites which seem to have disappeared completely some years after the French occupation.

The ossuary which we had just discovered was obviously an important one, in fact probably the most important on the island. I cannot say whether the forty-odd skulls which we discovered were the remains of human sacrifices.

I had only one clue to guide me: the analysis of the skulls revealed for the most part melanoid characteristics. This might point to the sacrifice of the black people conquered by the men of the Tiki.

We stood there spellbound in the embrasure of lianas bristling with skulls, outlined by the sunbeams, while long columns of smoke drifted towards us from the bonfires we had lit.

The forest was reliving the story of a deserted valley which once had seen the long procession of priests wearing their head-dresses of red feathers and of those who, from the Pass of Desire and to the sound of the sharkskin drums accompanying the cries of the tortured, were brought to be immolated for their faith.

Darkness began to descend. Following the course of the stream back to the camp, I made my way over the stone blocks constantly amazed at the enormous task entailed in this architectural work on such a jagged terrain. I picked some mape fruits and a few oranges.

I reached the beach just as a herd of wild pigs came down to drink at the spring. The sow and her farrows scattered in all directions. Everything was alive and marvellous. To the east the moon suddenly appeared like a silver coin watching the descent of the sun.

Grandiose and Dantesque, the great cliff was outlined in the setting sun above the Pass of Desire. And then the rays suddenly fell on the pass, dividing the crags with their mother of pearl faces, sweeping the forest of tombs with the glance of the gods, allowing this unforgettable miracle of dying light to hover for a moment under the first uncertain stars.



A tortoiseshell ornament. They were applied to a mother of pearl ensemble and sewn on the fillet of the packea

## CHAPTER 14

### *The Village of Ghosts*

**I**N the distance sharp reports rang out. Pau and Kumati had reached the herd of goats they were hunting. I lit a fire of coconut fibre which gleamed brightly on the foam-covered pebbles. It was a typical south sea island evening. I began to dream . . .

This long reverie in the dark led me back in time through the maze of valleys cut by noisy, vivacious cascades like the thousand laughs of children playing in the shadows of these villages of ghosts. I visualised one of these and could see a village of ghosts of yesterday.

In the shelter of the huts, huddled on a bed of fragrant leaves near the little candlenut lamp, a family slept, protected until daybreak by the watchmen perched on their tall paepae. Long before dawn the cry of the wild cocks was awakening the village. One by one fires were lit under the porch of the huts while the women beat the popoi to the sound of the stone pestles.

Under the falls groups of children chased the terrified natos (a kind of trout) while the men hidden behind the rocks after their first ablutions, scrubbed with sand the magnificent tattoos on their copper-coloured skins. In the village the men returning from their fishing by torchlight distributed scarlet fish which the children, gathered round the great rosewood plates of popoi, sprinkled with lemon before they ate. While the men oiled their bodies with coconut oil, mingled with saffron and flowers, the women went down to the river to adorn their



## THE VILLAGE OF GHOSTS

long tresses among the wild lilies before filling the big bamboos which served as pitchers with water.

Groups of men had already left the village to cut wild bananas which grew at the end of the rocky valleys or to stick wild pig. Sometimes they joined to build a new paepae or to carry a heavy stone statue which the sculptor had just finished. Free as little kings, the children crawled about under the porches of the huts, watching and learning the tasks of the grown-ups. To one side a fisherman was patiently attaching to his nets the polished mother of pearl hooks which were used to catch the bonitos. Further off a sculptor was cutting the bold firm designs in his hard ironwood club. Near him an old man was carving the handle of a royal fan from a human bone. With a shark's tooth, day after day, he had traced the immutable profile of three Tikis.

Nearby was a group of women dyeing damp tapa, while young girls wove garlands of ferns and flowers or pliant pandanus mats. Others were twisting tiny fibres of coconut into fine meshed nets for the fishermen. A boy stared in admiration at the delicate work of a koka maker, cutting with a stone adze an enormous sheet of wood which would be entirely covered with formal designs. The man worked slowly, like the builder of canoes, who had to burn the wood slowly before inserting the stone burin, making the curved hull and combining utility with beauty. From a distant hut could be heard the dull sound of the tattooer's light whale ivory hammer, torturing the flesh of the patient who overcame his pain by listening to the storyteller's tales.

High up on the chief's paepae, an old man sat on a willow mat patiently sorting the feathers which would make a most brilliant headdress for the ruler. At his side an old woman was finishing a strange plume made with old men's long white beards. This tall plume, which would enhance the beauty and strength of the warrior, would then be fixed on the large,

polished mother of pearl encrusted tortoiseshell, worn by the men on their foreheads before leaving for battle.

At the edge of the stream a young warrior was cutting up sharkskin to be stretched over the big drum. Strolling from hut to hut, learning and admiring, the children made their way to the beach. Under the Tuhuka Tekai Vaka's guidance, a group of fishermen were assembling the various parts of a double canoe which would hold as many as one hundred and forty warriors. Stem and stern were carved with Tikis while in the compartments separating the sides from the hull were slipped tufts of white sea birds' feathers.

At the edge of the beaches stood the tabu paepae where the fishermen foregathered. They formed a special caste; they were released from war service but had to observe special rules which, for example, forbade them all sexual intercourse during the great fishing expedition decreed by the Tahua!

Initiation into this life, designed solely to produce men prepared for every activity of the daily struggle, was constantly at hand. Thus the child according to his talents could choose the profession he preferred. Artistic professions were held in great esteem among the tribes: sculptors and stonemasons, engravers on wood, designers of figures and ornamental cords, architects, builders of silos, makers of drums, pestles and wooden bowls. Builders of canoes, makers of tortoiseshell headbands, fans (sacred objects), canoe coffins, circumcisers, makers of nets, storytellers, tattooers, surgeons and bone-setters, makers of fishing gear . . .

In this way the children gradually learned the art of life.

At the river's edge a barber, after carefully plucking a warrior's beard, began the delicate arrangement of the tresses and the cut of the hair. The head being sacred, this operation always took place over running water so that no hair could be picked up by some malicious person who might use it for casting a spell. Above these entirely tattooed faces, the hair style enhanced the strange appearance of the warriors. Hair

## THE VILLAGE OF GHOSTS

was cut nearly every week. To give some approximate idea of this art which was so simple in appearance, there were no less than seven different hair styles for the men—the head completely shaved, shaved on one side only, the top of the head decorated with a large tonsure or the reverse, a kind of bun piled up on top of the skull or a single very long tress wound round a ring of human bone and allowed to hang down from one side of the head. One of the strangest of these hair styles made the first discoverers think that they had reached the land of the devils. Some of the men had their heads entirely shaved except for two little curls on each side rolled up into horns!

To enhance the brilliance of their hair styles, the Tuhuka-Haapae made hats and headdresses. These included dark red turbans which the servants of the Tahua swathed round their heads leaving the ends to fall down on one side; mitres of plaited coconut leaves, worn by the Tuhukas who assisted the high priest at the rites; and the fillet of coconut fibres with long tail feathers of wild cocks worn by the Toa, the head warrior, when with a red cape flung over his shoulders he would defy his adversaries on the hills. The artist also knew how to make visors of multi-coloured feathers which the noble women wore or bouquets consisting of aigrettes or dozens of tern feathers.

But the most amazing and costly adornment was the head-band of little red and green feathers glued with ava juice round a square of red berries encrusted with black beads. This was the royal headdress. The most admirable object, because it was sacred, was the paekea which every warrior had to wear. It consisted of seven fine tortoiseshell plaques, superbly engraved with a shark's tooth, representing the seven phases of the creation of the world by the god Tiki. These transparent plaques were sewn alternately on a band of coconut fibre with eight white discs made of triton shells representing the tribal unity of earthly life, the reality of the number eight, the man

and his double. This precious object was nearly always surmounted at the centre by the pavahina, a kind of plume of old men's white beards representing the capture of waves—knowledge.

Each afternoon from the very earliest age the children assembled at the Tuhukaooko's hut. There in the shade of the mangoes they listened for hours to the genealogies of their families, the legends which, in the realms of the marvellous, bore their young imaginations away on the odysseys of their great heroes. The songs taught them all the gestures they would meet with in their future lives. This lasted until their twelfth year at which age they were circumcised with great ceremony and subjected to their first tattooings. They then became Kaioi and, until their marriage, they ran wild in the forest, leading the freest possible life with the girls, committing a great many mortal sins, perhaps in the knowledge that they were immortal. Thus, without having been educated to suppress their desires, they arrived at manhood and could perform their duties as fathers.

At nightfall the men and the fishers returned to the village and the children could listen to the stories which delighted them so much. Gathered round the fire, everyone joined in the communal meal, crouching round a large koka of popoi, fish and grilled pork. They ate with their hands, then went to the stream to rinse out their mouths and to take a final bath before anointing their bodies with fragrant pani. Sometimes at nightfall, on the invitation of the chiefs and the Tahua, the entire tribe gathered on the tohua, the public square, which was lit by torches of coconut leaves.

Opposite the chief's house which towered on the tohua, the assembled drums called the tribe to attend this night performance. The entire population then sat on the steps surrounding the open space to watch the dancing and the games. Swathed in their red capes, the warriors took up their positions near the entrance; draped in cloaks of white tapa

## THE VILLAGE OF GHOSTS

knotted at the shoulder, one arm free in the Roman manner, the women sat on the steps. The noblest of them were dressed in a voluminous mantle of tapa. Near the orchestra the young kaioi girls in striped yellow cloaks mingled with the dancers dressed in long finely pleated skirts.

At a signal from the chief, to the beat of the drums and handclapping, the songs rose in chorus from the whole tribe. Then followed the famous jousts with men on stilts, a magic game symbolising man before his fall on earth—man without joints like a god. This sport was strictly forbidden to women. Drawn up on both sides of a huge square surrounded by steps, the teams embarked on merciless matches with stone balls. Each man had to avoid being hit by the adversaries' projectiles. The games were interrupted by singing and dancing or by the appearance of teams of jugglers and acrobats.

Charming dances were sometimes performed by a young kaioi accompanied by two ten-year-old children. The most beautiful of these dances was the Haka Manu Manu—the dance of the birds. In pleated skirts of white tapa, the women with three long terns' feathers set in coconut fibre rings imitated all the movements of the flight of these birds. The music was perfectly suited to it. On these evenings a very special dance was sometimes performed with the object of introducing the young nubile girls. They had to dance naked in front of the whole tribe with the exception of the parents, who were never allowed to hear the slightest echo of their daughter's sexual life. Their uncles were the only exception.

The tribe learned new songs and listened to the word of the chiefs. The village exchanged the daily gossip and sorted out their differences. Gradually the women and children returned to their huts while the men consulted the Tahua or listened to the teaching of the bards, "the storytellers of the night." This was the occasion when wars or raids on neighbouring villages were planned. The torches were extinguished and only the Tahua seated in his chair

## IN SEARCH OF TIKI

of stone remained awake to question the star, for this was the hour of ghosts, the hour of fear. In the shadow of the huts with their waiting doors carefully closed the last murmurs died away as the occupants retired to the land of dreams . . .

In my hut the little lamp flickered at the feet of the sleeping dogs.



My aim next day was to climb the ridge which separated the two valleys. I should try to find a way of reaching the extraordinary lava needle we had seen from the sea; according to the natives it was the burial place of Tahua Eke, the last high priest.

The climb to the cliff led us through a forest of guavas which made progress slow. But the sight of the valley below us was so beautiful that it made us forget our weariness. We soon reached the top of the cliff where the crest line joins the summits in a gentle slope. At our feet the bay opened out transparent as the Tahiti lagoon and we could admire the beauty of its outlines beneath the Pacific swell. To the right, still separated from us by another valley, the needle rose out of the forest; two skeleton-like palm trees crowned it, the sign that it was an important site.

To get a better view of the approaches we had to follow the crest line and try to reach the crater which splits the island in two. It was hard going and it took us more than four hours to reach our objective. We gradually realised that there must once have been a path along the crest.

One thing disturbed me, and I kept thinking about it. Old Keakea had told me that the last queen of Fatu Hiva was buried in the great rock face in which the Pass of Desire opens, but this was the only information I had been able to obtain. At all costs I wanted to discover this tomb which would

certainly be hidden in one of the grottoes on the side of the cliff.

Although I scrutinised the walls, I could make out nothing, for vegetation sprouted from all the fissures. To all the questions I asked my companions I received no reply. Kumati in particular always seemed preoccupied when I mentioned the subject.

I decided to continue along this road which grew more and more difficult, for we had to cling to a wall with a drop of more than five hundred feet. Fortunately the vegetation was thick. Pau and Kumati kept trying to find a passage. We advanced yard by yard until we were opposite the gap made by the Pass of Desire on the other side of the valley.

Kumati suddenly called to us. He had spotted further traces of the old path, vague steps cut in the rock. There was no doubt about it, we were on the famous path which fifty years ago united the Hanavave valley with the east coast via the Pass of Desire. The vegetation grew sparser. Apart from a few seedlings there were practically no bushes to give us a handhold and it was a twelve hundred feet sheer climb to reach the pass, which now was clearly outlined ahead of us.

My two companions said that we must turn back because the lava was friable and they did not want to make any further attempt. We decided to return next day and cut a passage in the rocks with a pickaxe. It was a five hours' walk back to camp and we reached it as night fell.

By dawn the following morning we were already on the crest. On reaching our previous point I let Pau and Kumati follow the track while I climbed a needle overlooking the whole ridge to the right. I spent the hours taking bearings and finally returned to watch the sun sink into the Pass of Desire which I had decided to film.

I had to wait a further hour which I spent in focussing my camera and using the long distance lens on the crater round the pass. Then suddenly in my view finder I saw a long trail



of trachyte running in a slanting seam across the cliff. It was a very long and extremely narrow fault. I examined it inch by inch and finally distinguished two white shapes. There was no doubt about it. They were two coffins. This was probably the royal cave of which Keakea had spoken. I could hardly believe it. This was a sensational discovery.

Pau and Kumati returned at last. They were very tired for they had hardly advanced three hundred feet during the whole day but, according to them, we could attempt the climb. I was impatient to try and reach the cave but decided to keep my counsel because Kumati's behaviour seemed strange to me. The clouds piled up on the peaks and now there was no more question of trying to film the sunset over the pass. A storm threatened and we had to get back to camp.

We arrived in a nervous state of mind. I could not sleep because I was so overwhelmed by my discovery. A violent storm burst and, squatting by my miner's lamp, I wrote all night. I came to a decision. I would try and reach the grotto alone because I was sure that neither Pau nor Kumati would agree to follow me.



## CHAPTER 15

### *To the Pass of Desire*

AT dawn the storm had not yet blown itself out. Soaking wet and cold, we lit our fire under the porch of the hut. The rain did not stop until nine o'clock. All my plans were upset. I had been going to pretend that I wished to rest in camp for the day and send Pau and Kumati off hunting and go off on my own. They now decided, in view of the weather, not to leave until after lunch. And then, with a blast on its resonant marine conch, the canoe crew who had promised to return within a week came in sight over the boiling waves. We saw the canoe literally fly into the air, capsized by an enormous roller. But our provisions were rescued and everything was soon spread out on the shore to be dried.

Three men had come with the young Marquesan school teacher at Omoa. He was a delightful youth named Miro and I was very glad that he had joined me. We decided that next day, while the others were out hunting, we would try, if the weather premitted, to discover the grotto.

Now that I had some additional help, I wanted to try and reach the Pass of Desire. We set out in high spirits. Everyone was thrilled at the idea of reaching this pass which had become legendary for the whole island. Less than two hours later we reached the point of departure. Some of the men, however, on seeing the escarpment we had to climb in order to reach the pass, began to hesitate. According to them, it would be preferable to try it from the other side of the valley. Although I was doubtful of this, I agreed.

We set off in Indian file through the forest which clings close to the sheer cliff wall. The whole forest gave off a most welcome coolness. The descent was very stiff for more than four hundred yards. Then we entered a patch of lianas at the fringe of the marshes.

The forest was very beautiful and reminiscent of Amazonia. Adorned with orange and grey moss, the lianas intermingled and fell, creating an opaque veil from which the dew dripped in the rare rays of sunlight that filtered through the tree top foliage, and underfoot were the most beautiful white lilies.

The end of this fault which forms the valley head is only fifty yards across and the sun can only penetrate it vertically, since all the surrounding cliffs are sheer. It was impossible to find the passage which the men had spotted from the top of the cliff.

While clearing the undergrowth with my machete I discovered a stone foundation which must have served as a watch tower or a resting place en route to the pass.

Although we were very weary, we had to set out at once if we intended reaching the pass and leave time to return, despite the fact that as the crow flies we could not have been more than 600 feet from the pass. We skirted the first escarpment behind a small waterfall which drifted away in mind before reaching the valley some 1,500 feet below.

We reached a perpendicular climb of lava separating us from the pass and Pau asked that he should be allowed to go on ahead alone, with a rope and machete. We were not unduly alarmed because we were used to his extraordinary agility and coolheadedness. They were famous throughout the island.

Glued to the cliff, he advanced octopus fashion, thrusting his arm out like a tentacle while his fingers acted as the suckers. Every few feet he stopped and after spotting a slight fault in the rock would cut out a handhold with his axe. Less than a quarter of an hour later he had reached the pass 1,800 feet above the valley. We followed.

The wall ends with a spur which towers more than 600 feet. The last few yards opened up, all of a sudden, a magnificent view over the whole island. We could see all the valleys where we had been for the past months. The pass lay below, and the wind blew through it with great violence. A few yards away in the cliff face yawned the hole which I believed to be the true pass, pierced with a tongue of lava not more than twelve feet thick.

From the Pass of Desire the whole sea-girt island could be seen. In the distance loomed the great cliff of Hiva Oa. This island looked like a moving picture in which layers of cloud were breaking up and reforming along the valleys which fell away steeply on various sides of the extinct crater.

The Pass of Desire preserves the vivid memory of the women who came here to wait for their men who had left on the long pilgrimage to Hanaoua. In the pass itself, bowed by the wind, two dwarf mangoes dating from ancient days have survived. In the trunk of one of them a stone arrow was embedded like the needle of a compass on a true east-west axis. We belayed our rope to the mangoes and slipped down to see if we could find the ancient path which led up to the pass from the Hanavave side.

The bare cliff fell sheer for some 100 feet before the first vegetation appeared. On examining the wall we could see that in the old days a regular staircase had been cut which, according to the tales I had heard, was entirely destroyed on the death of Tahua Eke to bar access for ever to the east side.

The tale told to me by the men of Hanavave relates in detail the mystery of the forbidden side. The missionaries, with the help of the government, had decided that in order to put a stop to the influence of the Tahuas, they would trick them into passing beneath a little bridge across which women had passed, and thus the Tahuas would be ridiculed and discredited for ever, since being holy men, their heads must not be lower than a woman.

Tahua Eke, the last high priest of the island, was warned just in time, and escaped to the east coast by way of the Hana-vave pass. The islanders brought his provisions in secret. But on his death they destroyed the passage across to the east so that their high priest could rest there in silence for ever.

Thus the east coast remained, and I hope will remain for a long time, the last undisturbed refuge of what was once a people.

While the team rested I drew a map of the terrain. Unfortunately I could not film it. As usual, the centre of the island was covered with moving cloud.

Back in the camp at nightfall, as a rainstorm beat down and the gusts rattled on the palm leaf roof, we huddled round our miner's lamp and listened to the legend of Koomahu. This is a long account of the life of an unwanted child who was brought up by two old men. It recounts how he finds his parents and then of his quest for fire, which he created, and of his marriage which ended with his death, designed by his mother-in-law, who with some justification disliked him and sent him on a fruitless journey to the doors of heaven, where the guardian killed him.

Every legend in the island was a parable designed to make the listener reflect. One of the teachings of this is that no matter how powerful he may be on the earth, no man can force his way into heaven.

The legends take long in the telling and last far into the night.

*The Last Queen and a Warning*

AT daybreak Miro and I were ready to leave for the grotto or cave which I sought, but the sun did not appear until eleven o'clock. When we set off I took a knife and sixty feet of nylon rope for the climb. Knowing the valley well by now, we reached the point of departure in less than an hour. The only method was to attack the cliff and get above the trees where we should have a view. The valley rapidly narrows and the cliff is completely vertical, at times overhanging, but as long as there were lianas we should find handholds.

Above the forest line we noticed that we were at the foot of the crater, and that the valley end was no more than thirty feet across. I managed to take my bearings. If my calculations were correct the grotto should have been about one hundred and fifty feet vertically above our heads. But however intently I scrutinised the cliff which was covered with dwarf ferns and dry grass, I could see nothing.

It was extremely rough going for the handholds were dangerous, the lava kept crumbling and it was impossible to drive in any pitons. Yard by yard we pressed on for more than two hours until I began to doubt the accuracy of my bearings. There was no question of giving up, although we were exhausted and lacerated. We had to climb barefooted for this was the only way of getting a grip on the jagged lava. We still found nothing and yet I was convinced that we were nearing our goal. It was impossible to lean away from the wall to try to see where we were. I decided that we would split up.

## IN SEARCH OF TIKI

Miro continued to climb while I descended a little on the slant. After ten minutes Miro shouted to me. With a great effort I turned and climbed up to him, but I could see nothing. We belayed our rope round several roots for Miro told me that he had spotted traces of trachyte, a little to the right under the vegetation. By leaning back a little I could now see them. A strange odour like the scent of flowers came up from below, but there was not a single blossom on the cliff face.

This perfume was now to be our guide, and we did not hesitate any longer. While I tautened my back to hold the rope and watch the belay, Miro paid out sixty feet of rope and clinging on to the wall by his feet with body arched he began to descend. I felt him stop in the void. I could only see his head looking up at me. I understood.

He had arrived at the fault which scarred the grass. But according to him he still lacked three feet of rope to reach a ledge on to which he could cling. I called to him to do his best for I wanted to join him. We had to get through. The sun would soon descend behind the cliff and we had been battling for five hours.

Only one solution remained—to cling flat to the wall and to fall, tearing our hands and feet. If we failed we could hope to catch on to some bushes some twenty feet lower down.

And we let go . . .

It was a giddy business for the abyss yawned more than four hundred and fifty feet below. Miro was the first. Oke! I tumbled down and we found ourselves on the three feet wide ledge. The fault opened just ahead of us. I was very excited.

An enticing, magical odour came from it. We slipped between the narrow walls which suddenly opened out, and were faced with a fantastic sight. Almost intact, two tall white canoe-coffins stood bow to bow separated by a bush of white flowers not unlike the tiare moorea.

Very moved, we approached. The coffins were outlined against the black background of the grotto. The grotto itself

was covered with a fine layer of guano upon which petals from the bush had dropped as on precious velvet. We hardly dared approach. Hoisting ourselves on our elbows we caught a glimpse of the rigid corpse of a woman lying on a thick shroud of tapa.

It was the last queen—the Queen of Fatu Hiva. I have never before experienced such a feeling of awe and respect.

The dead queen's thick tresses were spread out almost undisturbed on a roll of white tapa. It served as a neck rest such as we find among the Egyptians and the Dogons. The skeleton, still attached by strips of tapa, rested with the arms glued to the body on a mattress of tapa. This was also white and more than three feet wide. Beneath the body the material was slightly decayed but like a phantom it had thus preserved the corpse's exact imprint.

The most impressive feature was the skull still crowned with hair. The bones of the skull, bathed by the sun streaming eternally into the grotto, had taken on the colour of pale pink ivory and somehow seemed to endow the two enormous staring black-eyed sockets with life.

We dared not touch anything.

The strange whiteness of the coffins was another factor which reduced us to silence; and the complete absence of any memorial objects. The simplicity of the shroud gave it an immense majesty. Separated by a fragile frontier of wild flowers was another canoe-coffin which, half-buried, seemed no more than the shadow of the other. A man's skeleton lay there on a shroud of immaculate white tapa. The last queen pursued her final journey together with her lifetime consort.

The white flowering bush appeared like a miracle of the eternal presence of life, slumbering in the shrouds and leaving as testimony of happiness this odour which stole over the rocks, to the delight of the birds. To me, however, it was an emotional ordeal, almost an agony, to look on the remains of the royal face. Placed on the axis of the path of the sun her

lofty coffin surveyed the dizzy scene below, a scene of splendour that had once been her realm and still remained a natural palace.

Encircled by sheer escarpments of tortured lava, the forest was engulfed in stone as it assailed the great rock face. From the clifftop the luminous ribbon of a waterfall dissolved in spray on a clump of tree ferns just at the foot of the coffins near which, every evening, the terns came to sleep.

The evening shadows crept along the walls which towered 2,000 feet above the valley. We had to leave quickly unless we wished to be caught in the mist which was slowly rising from the forest. A last glance into the cave where the shadow was gradually veiling the coffins . . . a last glance at those still faces waiting for the stars, at those faces we should never see again because it was better that they should continue on their eternal journey, alone, far from the gaze of man.

We seized the rope and with a jerk of the arm managed to get a foothold on the rock face. Perhaps through emotion, I had hardly the strength to climb and missed a hold, escaping death by a hair's breadth. We pressed on, clutching to roots and branches. We had to be quick for if night fell we should not be able to find our way through the forest. After an arduous tramp we reached the camp where the men were crouching round the fire cutting up the goats.

We immediately felt the atmosphere. It was almost certain that they had seen us. I hesitated to mention our discovery to my companions, for I thought that if old Kea Kea had refused to show me the exact site of the tomb, it was because he attached great value to this last refuge of his island's past. I hesitated because I feared their reactions but I was certain that they had seen us and had guessed the truth by the look in our eyes. Utterly exhausted we retired to our little hut. It was a mild night and yet we were all suffering from nerves. A frightening incident occurred during the night and I shall describe what happened in a moment.



I could not sleep and I went on writing almost under compulsion. All the scientific theories of the problem in which I was interested flashed through my mind. Thor Heyerdahl and I were almost alone in the conviction that the pre-Columbians came to the Pacific islands and were the final race to do so, and that the migration was not in the reverse direction. I was suddenly faced with a very simple piece of evidence. Had the men of the islands ever reached the Americas there would have been some trace of the outrigger canoes, which exist everywhere from Madagascar to Gambia via Insulindi. These canoes were an innovation in navigation, still unknown to the Indians of Amazonia. Even today they can only put to sea on rafts. There are no traces of this craft in America. It is certain that it would immediately have been adopted by the Indians had one of them ever reached their coasts from Polynesia.

As the night advanced our party grew more nervous. I noticed this when several of my companions woke up and began to smoke nervously. Under the hut we heard the dogs growing restless. I paid no attention. They had grown in number that evening because the relief party had brought four more to go hunting.

Suddenly our miner's lamp went out and at the same moment the dogs began to rattle their long chains. They leaped about in all directions as though attacking strangers wandering about the camp.

"*Tupapau!*" said the men. Ghosts!

I tried to remain calm but the noise increased. The dogs seemed to have gone mad. I waited. At last I said to the terrified men that they should remain where they were and that I would go and see what was happening. I picked up a large electric torch and went out of the hut. I called to the dogs but I could not pacify them. I turned my torch on them. They were attacking an invisible prey . . .

I must admit that I was beginning to panic. I called Pau and Miro. We focussed our torches and walked forward. The

dogs continued their blind attacks, chasing some invisible shape left and right. We did not know what to do. We could only return to the hut and wait. The men were paralysed with terror.

*"Aita Maitai !"* It is not good, whispered Kumati.

The turmoil must have lasted for more than an hour before the dogs stopped barking and, still growling, slunk under the hut. The atmosphere relaxed but the men decided unanimously that they would leave at daybreak. Kumati told me he was afraid. It was the ghosts who had come to tell us to leave. It was not good to remain in the valley of the dead.

I questioned Pau who also seemed to hesitate. Then I told the men that in any case I intended to remain. Without demur they began preparations for their departure. I did not want them to see my fear at having to carry on my work alone. I stored the provisions they had brought me and scribbled a letter to the chief. At dawn the material was in the canoes and it only remained to put the goats aboard. I accompanied the party down to the beach. I simply asked Miro to tell Willy not to worry. I would remain on my own but he should try and send for me in three weeks' time. Miro was obviously very upset at leaving me, but he could not stay. I asked him not to mention our discovery to anyone.

At the moment the live goats were pushed into the water to get them aboard a little offshore, Pau came over to me and said : " If you stay, I'll stay with you."

" Good."

One by one the men said goodbye. Then they jumped into the canoe which was borne by the brisk breeze out into the bay. In a few minutes it would have disappeared. Now we could not retreat and it was better like that.

I have not told this story to amuse stay-at-home psychoanalysts but so that these facts, which have often been observed, may allow a better perception of the so-called primi-

## THE LAST QUEEN AND A WARNING

tive mentality which, in contact with a different reality, is so different from ours in its comprehension of life.

Tired and perhaps overwrought by this strange warning, Pau and I remained alone that day in the hut. It was very peaceful. The following day we were to leave to explore four valleys that run parallel and north of this amazing Hanaoua valley. We should have to lead a Spartan life for we could carry very few provisions. We shared our burden—machete, rope, pick, a cooking pot, a little salt, sugar, rice, technical equipment and a gun.

It was with regret that we left the Hanaoua valley but our prospecting work, so to speak, was ended. There would be a considerable amount of excavation to do at a later date. From the ridge I could not help staring for a long time at this marvellous valley split in two by a long tongue of lava, pierced with blow holes. From all sides it appeared what it was—a sacred place.

Our aim was to reach the Hanateone valley where we were to establish our new base before nightfall. It is separated from its sister valley of Hanaoua Nui by a long ridge, difficult enough to cross, for on leaving the forest there is a second, almost vertical climb over sun-baked scree. Here the cliff crests have been completely devoured by the goats; they have left it a craggy desert. There is beauty, however, in its ruggedness. The razor-edged ridge falls vertically to the bay of Hanateone which lay before us. It was an unforgettable sight with its fringe of foam edging a cobalt blue, changing sea.

Preceded by the dogs I tumbled rapidly down the slope. On the point of reaching the last scree we came upon a troop of a dozen goats which were unable to escape before Pau had shot three for our larder. Now heavily laden, we reached the pebbled beach which surrounds the bay with a bouquet of foam. It was a happy place. Hanateone is the typical romantic beach to welcome deserters from a tall sailing ship. A few yards from the beach, well concealed in the shadow of the

palms, was a Niau hut surrounded by a stone wall. From time to time the islanders still come here to hunt for a few days, for the valley teems with wild boar.

We were very lucky to find this shelter. Now all we had to do before dark was to dig a water hole. Hanateone, which in the old days possessed a stream, is now completely dry.

While Pau prepared and salted the venison, I strolled off into the undergrowth to pick a few wild oranges. These fruits would be very precious for apart from the goats we had nothing else to eat. My first rapid inspection showed me that this valley was once thickly populated. Night fell. We ate with our dogs and slept with them at our sides. We were looking forward to the following day.

Under an exceptionally blue sky the morning sun shone on the valley which opened before us in all its splendour. At the outset we advanced along a flagstone path with ruined buildings along one side. The path ran above the narrow bed of the stream under the cliff. Everything was intact except the superstructures and we passed through a village which actually appeared to have been abandoned not very long ago.

The valley opened like a vivid document recreating life at every step as though we had discovered a newly excavated Pompeii. We found terraces still intact, held in place by the giant roots of the mape.

We found no traces of burial.

The higher we mounted the valley the closer the stone foundations of old buildings nestled against the hummocks of the terrain. We discovered enormous walls fifteen to twenty feet high. All these walls and terraces have preserved a veritable garden of greenery and top soil.

I saw Pau suddenly stop, fall to his knees and beckon to me. Just ahead of us a wild boar and a dozen young were burrowing on a terrace piled with mape fruits. Pau fired at the very moment the sow appeared to have scented us. It fled, wounded, followed by the piglets. Pau rushed after them

## THE LAST QUEEN AND A WARNING

and, following through rocks and lianas, he managed to capture three alive. They screamed and struggled and finally won the battle. We could not kill them because they were so attractive! We tied them together to a tree and continued on our way letting them wait for us, screaming for their mother, but later they became delightful pets.

This was perhaps a lucky incident, for by continuing to explore the neighbourhood we noticed that we were at the foot of a huge terrace towering above the dried-up stream. Although vegetation had covered every building we realised at once that we had hit upon a kaokai, one of the famous assembly places. It was almost unspoiled and was one of the most satisfying discoveries of the expedition.

Together with Hanaoua, the valley of the coffins, Hanateone, with its exciting traces of life and habitation, we were afforded a magnificent picture of the seven forgotten valleys. I was glad I had ignored the ghost, or was it an invitation?

## CHAPTER 17

### *Where Children Rule*

**A**RMED with picks, machetes, knives and ropes, we set out to clear the enormous kaokai. It was bounded on one side by the stream and on the other by the flagstone way. On the river side it was less than eighteen feet high by thirty feet broad and fifteen feet long. The terrain had been entirely levelled to give a flat surface. Everything seemed quite intact under a coverlet of green, which we had to tear down to bring to light the ancient structure of this huge edifice.

Clearing the spot took at least eight days, for we had to cut down about thirty tall mangoes which had taken root between the stones. We were so intent upon our work that everything seemed easy. We cut the mangoes into logs and rolled them down into the bed of the stream. The main work now being finished we could attack the undergrowth with fire. As it took hold the paving stones were revealed intact. In a succession of terraces they surrounded the arena for more than five hundred yards. The ensemble, although not the largest I saw in the islands, was in any case the best preserved, and its layout was unusual.

The plan reproduced, better than any description, will give a clear picture of the site. It could hold more than 1,500 warriors at the time of the great feasts. In the centre was the assembly place, an area of more than thirty yards long and eleven yards wide to which the paved way gave access. From the steps the people could watch the jousting and the dancing. In various parts of the square were the stands reserved for the king, the priests and the warriors.



The system of whippings on a Polynesian canoe

A wonderfully ornamented wooden koka, three-foot-six in diameter







A basalt pestle for making poi-poi



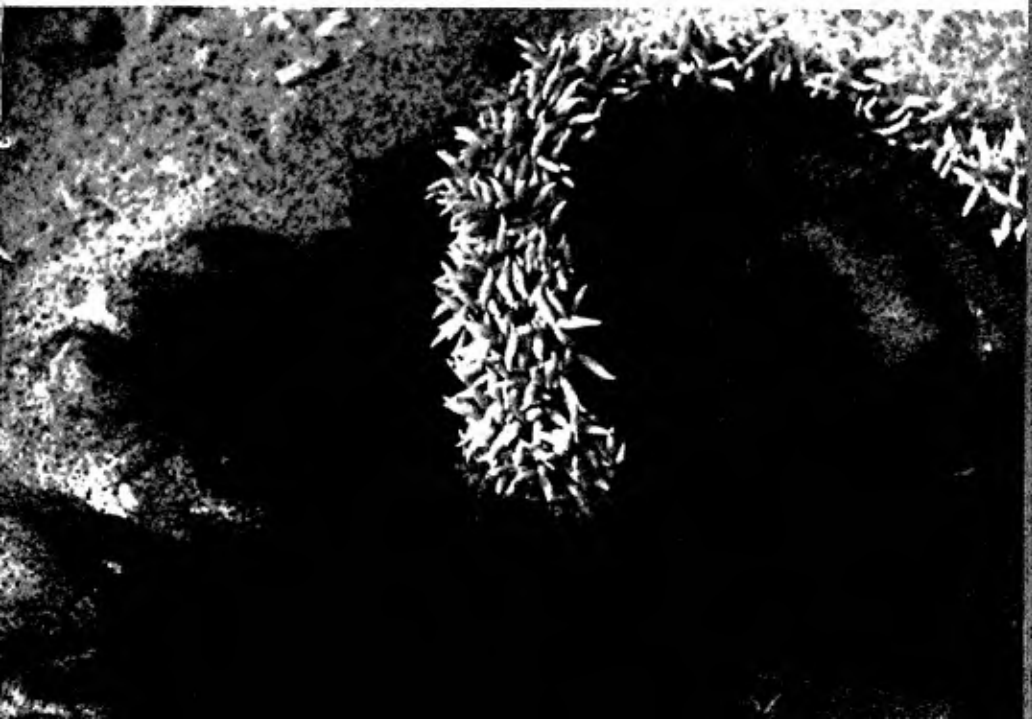
Another pestle, with no  
mistaking its origin





Come across suddenly, Tiki heads have a decidedly macabre quality

This diadem of whale teeth is adorned with human hair





One wonders what secrets have lain with them all these years, what heritage of island lore and strains from far-off races

## WHERE CHILDREN RULE

The whole area was carefully paved except the part used for the games. This contained a mixture of gravel and soil as did the centre of the tall cube-like paepae dominating the whole scene. This measured twenty-one feet at the base and was nine feet high, and on it probably once stood the pyramidal house of the Tohua. On this edifice sat the high dignitaries. When there were no feasts it appears to have been the residence of the Tahua. We spent a long time here because it was difficult to unearth three large stones engraved with six anthropomorphic patterns. These enormous blocks, tiles hewn from a single slab of red tufa, had in time sunk slowly into the central soil of the paepae. We had the greatest difficulty getting them out without breaking them. They covered a perfect square of twelve feet inside the cubic paepae, were well cut and, somehow tragically, they were found to record the gestures of procreation. These people, decimated and isolated, conscious of their racial problem, sensed the tragedy of their future and portrayed it, the passionate desire to have children.

Simple drawings . . . and in them could be seen that respect and love of children which can only surprise, even today, anyone who visits the islands.

The sanctity of the child created in all the Pacific islands that most curious of all institutions—adoption. This word was distorted by the whites who, as usual, before analysing the problem deeply, merely judged it from the dictionary meaning.

I am forced to speak on this subject which is certainly at the present moment the most disturbing problem of the islands. It is still manifestly impossible to apply there the laws of a country which, although protecting illegitimacy *a priori*, finds it moral to abandon an illegitimate child to the public welfare. Grave results would follow if the administration tried to apply that morality to the children of these islands. But it must be maintained from the start that, fortunately, the islanders would never accept the hypocrisy which allows children to be abandoned and brought up in an institution.

Here I will defend most fiercely the most remarkable institution of the islanders which, with no pretension to the morality of approved schools, sanctifies children and has protected them for centuries against the sorrows of abandonment. Adoption is the clue to everything that goes to make up the charm of the islands. It is still inherent in the extreme gentleness shown the traveller who, as soon as he has landed, is immediately adopted and protected.

This adoption, which so many travellers to the islands have enjoyed, should have prevented them to pronounce any judgment on such a private chapter in the life story of this last paradise.

No! The men of the islands do not give away their children because they are ignorant of the meaning of paternal love. People who have written such slanderous rubbish can be treated like those cretins who, after a week in France, take the liberty of saying that every Frenchwoman is a whore.

There are several social causes which have produced this phenomenon of adoption in all the South Sea island groups. The first reason, of course, is the extraordinary close relationships. I do not say consanguinity, which unites the inhabitants of these small islands. They are one big family in which the child is considered as the offspring of the group.

The second reason is the problem of infant mortality which, as a result of venereal diseases introduced by the Spaniards, assumed disastrous proportions. This problem obviously made unhappy couples eager to seize the chance of adopting the offspring of healthy couples.

But the most important factor is to be found in the social state which always guided and still guides, in spite of everything, the population as a whole. This social state is almost incomprehensible to our civilisation with its concepts of pride, inheritance and the family hearth.

It has been maintained that the South Sea islands were pre-eminently a land of luxury, debauch and heaven knows what

else. How can I refrain from speaking of the delicacy and the high moral behaviour which I have always found? How can it be explained that in the midst of this so-called "debauch" there has never been a case throughout the islands of any parents abusing their children? And now let me explain . . .

Tiki society, by conferring the title of adult on the child as soon as it reached puberty, conferred on it at the same time the right to lead its own sexual life. There was no question at this age of thoughts of procreation. Now it is obvious that this hunger for life or I might say for pleasure in youth was hardly compatible with the education of a child. It was therefore accepted that children born of these unions should immediately be adopted, not for the rest of their lives, but for the years deemed necessary for their education. The adopted child was not considered to have changed its family. It still belonged to the legitimate father and mother and was returned to them as soon as they wished.

This abuse of sexuality often caused impotence in the girls at an early age. Having reached the age of marriage they then had recourse to adoption. The cycle having thus been established, each individual found a perfect balance in life. One might object of course that from a western point of view it is inadmissible for a mother to give away her child. This objection can hardly be valid for an island society which recognises the group before the individual. By this cycle of adoption, it placed the true hearth in the community. In any case, adoption protected the Tiki archipelago from infanticide and all the pathological consequences which are the present-day scourge of the so-called civilised races.

One thing is certain, and no visitor can deny this, the child is king in the South Seas. His dazzling sweetness reflects the mildness of the family circle in which he lives. The child being the end process of human love, the society of the islands prolongs this act of love in the happiness which it endeavours, by all its customs, to give children until the age of emancipa-

tion. The act of entrusting the child to a stranger for adoption so that it may express its heartfelt desire to know something else and learn, is an expression of this love.

It must be recognised that in the natives' minds there can be no doubt as to the attitude that the foreigner could have towards a child, and I must admit that there has never been a case of abuse of confidence in this respect. Thus the great Frenchman, Alain Gerbault, who was so warmly accepted by the people of the islands, conceived a veritable passion for the charm of these children. Constantly he was driven to live with them and to adopt them.

Naturally some scoundrels, doubtless jealous of the immense prestige Gerbault enjoyed with the natives, spread the report that he had a pathological interest in minors. This is a good example of how these pathetic ink-slingers can sully the true face of life. Certain of these same creatures were of sufficiently high rank to have known how to show more correctness towards one of the best representatives of France in the Pacific. Let these little cretins remember that if the paradise dies it will unquestionably be their fault, but that Gerbault will remain forever at Bora-Bora where children live who still respect his tomb.

A personal experience was to confirm this extraordinary confidence the islanders display towards the child. While recently making a film of the life of Polynesian children, I met on the island of Maupiti such an admirable child that I did not hesitate to go to see his parents to ask their permission to film him. This would have obliged me to keep the boy for more than three months and to take him away from his island. Without reserve the parents agreed since the child showed a desire to follow me.

After everything had been decided, the parents said to me quite simply: "Now you are the papa. Love Teui well as we love him, be happy as he is happy, and come back soon to see us." I noticed when we left that the parents were sad but

## WHERE CHILDREN RULE

at the same time they were delighted to see their child looking forward to his adventure. That was enough. I shall never forget those three months with that little boy, who was as keen to learn about my life as I was to discover his charm. Treated as our child, he was a constant source of joy to my wife and my camera team.

But the deserted valley in which Pau and I wandered would never again know this kind of laughter. It was only a far distant past that we were unearthing with great difficulty.



*The World's Oldest Migrations*

THAT evening Pau and I spoke for a long time of these warriors of whom Captain Cook wrote that they were the "finest race in the Pacific, perhaps surpassing all other nations." For this race of athletes war was a sport, a competition even though it was always motivated by vengeance, rivalry or priestly orders to obtain human victims. War was decided by oracle. The chief convened his allies and, assembled on the warriors' paepae, worked out the plan of attack. Their preparations finished, after sounding the Puko-tua which was to bring down reprisals from the gods on the enemy, the warriors scaled the mountain crests and waved huge red tapa cloaks, the signal for declaration of war.

On their return to the valley all the warriors had to bathe before donning their battle finery, which consisted of a short cape of human hair. Rings of the same material encircled their waist and ankles. Their ears were covered with long discs of whitewashed wood and round their necks they wore necklaces of cachalot teeth. Every warrior wore a tortoiseshell paekeas and round the belts some of them sported skulls filled with little pebbles. Their armament was purely offensive. It consisted of a wooden lance, a finely sculptured ironwood club, and a sling. Before the start of hostilities the warriors became tabu and were forbidden all sexual intercourse but the women always accompanied their men from a distance. The main tactic in their wars was surprise and ambush—the tactic of the



hunter. However cruelly waged, the war always ceased at nightfall and was continued at dawn. During the night each faction retired to rest in his own village.

If the surprise attack did not succeed swiftly, the war stopped as soon as there were a number of wounded, but if the attack succeeded the victors showed no pity and for the unfortunate vanquished the only chance that remained was to take to their canoes in search of a more hospitable shore. When hostilities were prolonged certain emissaries, who had relations in the enemy tribe, had the right to pass from one camp to the other without being molested. It was by their good offices that a truce could be demanded at any moment, either for a funeral or simply to take a rest. The emissaries simply planted a pennant of white tapa on a peak visible to both sides. If the two parties agreed the chiefs met, each holding a pennant which they exchanged. Alas, the truce often ended with an exchange of human victims.

Sometimes peace became an alliance which the two parties celebrated with a great feast. If the chiefs exchanged their children in sign of lasting peace, the two tribes became Huumata—"joined like the eyelids of the sky." On such an occasion a feast was celebrated such as one finds all over the world. It was the Haka-Hiti, a vying in prodigality where each tribe tried to surpass the other in generosity by an extraordinary display of all its wealth. This feast sometimes ruined a certain valley and it often needed several years to make good a patrimony which had been wasted in a few nights of incredible feasting.

It is very difficult for us to understand, with all these contradictions, the exact mentality of this race. We must try and put ourselves in the framework of this isolated civilisation for which this game of strength, whatever its nature, was the indispensable method of maintaining, even at the price of cruelty, the vitality of the human group. It is obvious that among so many contradictions insecurity reigned supreme.

Each valley and at times even each village had constantly to be on the alert. This perpetual vendetta forced them to organise a complete defence system: observatories, watchmen, fortifications barring narrow passages, shelters for non-combatants, and as a last resource the upkeep of canoes constantly in a state of seaworthiness, the ultimate refuge of a tribe upon its defeat.

These defeats explained the populating of all the various island groups. Their historical role, however painful, was primordial and ultimately led to the peopling of New Zealand.

Here I may refer to one of the most fantastic of the legends of these Tiki isles, eloquent as it is of the amplitude of these vast Pacific migrations: the legend of the Maori king Anua Motua and his fabulous expedition by rafts in search of "the navel of the world," today's Easter Island.

The first island visited by the expedition was uninhabitable. Next they landed at Eiragi (Pitcairn), also deserted at that time. Anua Motua decided to populate it. He made his daughter Tuatutea queen, married her to Tiniraueriki, and left them a few warriors and some women as subjects. He and the largest part of the emigrants then continued their odyssey, now turning eastwards. They landed on Ducie Island, which they also called Tekava, and still bearing east, continued the quest for the island they sought, Te Pipo te Fenua, "the navel of the world," the goal of their journey, also known as Matakiteragi, or Kairagi; other Maoris have called it Rapa Nui.

The days slipped by without land appearing. All on the rafts were terrified except Anua Motua and his three sons who had confidence in him. They knew that their father had travelled the world and that in consequence he must know the route that led to the island.

One day, far away on the darkening horizon, a large continent was seen. Anua Motua himself was cold and everyone else was shivering. Looking up at the stars, Anua Motua ordered his sons to put about, saying "We have arrived at Taikoko." (Tai, the sea close to the shore, koko, the exit).

## THE WORLD'S OLDEST MIGRATIONS

The sea was rough and the air cut like a knife. It was extremely cold. His children having asked why he did not go any further, Anua Motua replied that the further they advanced the colder they would become, because ahead of them lay two lands and between them a dangerous sea. They were apparently off Cape Horn!

The part of the sea where the small choppy waves constantly broke was called Ragirari (Ragi, meaning sky, and rari, angry). There was no vegetation on the foreshore; the sun never rose high in the sky; there were tall, barren mountains, very close set, a harbour with many whales, and fish such as they had never seen before. Anua Motua added that he had been this way before but had thought he would lose his life: for this reason, because there was danger, great danger, he must not now go any further.

The vicinity in which they lay was apparently either the Straits of Lemaire or the Straits of Magellan. Then he fell silent and his children, obeying, put about and the people in the other raft followed suit and the emigrants started a new journey in the opposite direction.

The east wind now blew them rapidly up the Pacific towards the island of their quest. And at last they arrived there, exhausted and at the end of their tether. This anecdote was first related in 1912 by A. C. Eugene Caillot.

I know no more serious Polynesian legend than this tale of Anua Motua. The details are precise. The description of the lands and the climate in particular cannot be the work of imagination. On approaching these near-Antarctic regions Anua Motua's immediate decision was proof that he was fully aware of the relative position of Easter Island and knew by the stars and the current how to get there swiftly from the east.

I do not wish to embark upon a controversy on the opinion that the Polynesians came from the West. Both Heyerdahl and myself entertain no doubts. The men who founded what is

known as the Polynesian race came from the east. Nevertheless I shall try and sum up very briefly what we know.

One fact is certain: primitive humanity all over the globe comprised an initiated unity of a kind which we can still find everywhere today but which, in view of its danger for the moral traffic of our civilisation, has been qualified as "magic." This word which has been emasculated means "the mastery of forces by knowledge." It is the unity of the knowledge of abstract principles which is common to all these "primitive" races.

White elements coming from the Mediterranean basin reached the Americas some five thousand years before Christ, bringing with them the principles which gave a spur to the sudden birth of the pre-Columbian civilisations. It is very probable that certain Phoenician vessels after passing the straits of Djebel-Tarik (Gibraltar) on their way to the African coast, were swept away by storms and currents. On a level with the Canaries were currents which would have carried them towards the Caribbean Sea.

The men who came ashore in America founded the priestly caste which ruled the autochthonous populations. Do not let us forget that as late as the Inca, the chief was always masked and invisible. It is certain that the Indian races knew these whiteskins, made them their first gods and began the perpetuation of the feeling of respect towards them. Certainly in religious thought they remained the reincarnation of their ancestors. It suffices to recall the enthusiasm with which the Indians welcomed the first conquistadors and to know how much the pre-knowledge of the arrival of these men had been inherent in pre-Columbian thought.

A knowledge of the incarnation of the divine word in the abstract principles of numbers was an essential basis for the men who built the orientated pyramids. From Yucatan to the limits of the Andes they testify to the initiation of the priestly caste. This initiation continued to be transmitted right through

## THE WORLD'S OLDEST MIGRATIONS

the invasions which submerged the Olmecs, races which ruled central America until the appearance of the Maya about 3,000 years before the Christian era.

Quetzalcoatl, the hero of the Chichimec invaders, had a white skin.

It is certain that the mixture of blood, conditions of life, and so on, modified considerably the dogma, the behaviour and the perception of knowledge. When the Olmecs were ousted by the Maya invasion they certainly formed, even after 3,000 years of life cut off from its sources, a human group different in its essence and its ethics. They were the same men who, annihilating and dismembering according to their rites, set out across the ocean on their balsa rafts. They bore with them to the frontiers of the Pacific the last elements of an art designed to concretise the teaching which each individual had to acquire in order to share in society; a precise cosmogony, an immutable guide book of dreams; a wisdom built in the image of the happiness of knowledge. This wisdom was to be stifled for ever and, in the face of the monstrous violence of modern civilisations, nothing finally was left but the smile, the secret smile . . .

The mixture of melanoid bloods with this race, already separated from its group, was to lead to the creation of a racial branch bewildering not only to the anthropologist but psychologist. Recent American researches carried out on Japanese who have lived for more than a century in the Hawaiian islands prove categorically with what speed, in a different climate and subjected to different contacts, a population can undergo a complete change both physiological and psychical. Now for five centuries there is no place in the world which has known more disruptions of its customs, blood and language than the Pacific. It is a disturbing, incontestable fact. Quiros, who first landed in 1595 in the Eastern Polynesian groups, recorded the presence of white elements with blue eyes and described a

similar language (now totally extinct) to that of the pre-Columbian races.

Let me say at once to those who will object that fair hair can perhaps be obtained by dyes or discoloration that this external characteristic is not an argument which will hold water in the face of the statement by Quiros and others: "their eyes were sometimes blue." Another fact disturbed me a great deal in the course of my researches and I checked its accuracy on the different islands. Certain Tahuas, particularly at Raiatea, had announced long before the arrival of the first European discoverers, the approach of white-skinned men, reincarnations of the ancestors, who would arrive at the islands in tall, broad canoes like marae, adorned with a thousand veils, the colour of their skin. How could the Tahuas have known such things? (I am thinking in particular of the sailing ship) if they had not by oral and initiative tradition secretly preserved the essential principle of the origin of the priestly caste? It is probable for this reason that the Indians of America and then the people of the Pacific islands received as gods the first white discoverers. The price they paid was terrible . . . the shrines and temples of Central America, pillaged and destroyed, the Tiki archipelago stifled and pillaged by decorated oafs, the library of Cuzco which possessed more than two thousand codices burned by the Spanish Inquisition, men massacred, women raped and the survivors prostituted to alcohol.

What remains to bear witness? Down in the south in forgotten Tierra del Fuego are perhaps some forty surviving white Indians, their lips sealed like the famous men with the long ears, whom we had sought in vain in the jungles of Amazonia. The great voyage of the human race is dead. These migrations which at times comprised a thousand souls disseminated in the Eastern Pacific a great number of strains and even of different races which still form the disparate

populations of the islands. Even at Tahiti, to quote one of the most delicate examples, one can still see an extraordinary difference between the populations of the east coast and those of the west. Even today the islanders from the east coast speak of their ancestors who possessed bows and arrows.

Apart from wars, these migrations were decided upon either as the result of the over-population of certain islands or of some great national disaster which rendered the island uninhabitable for generations—as is still the case in Amazonia—and also on the decision of certain priests who knew that the island was only a halting place on the road to the setting sun. The populating of the Pacific islands developed in the shape of a star radiating from certain groups which were apparently the Gambier Islands, the Tiki archipelago and finally, leewards, is the islands surrounding "Holy Raia-tea"—Hawaii which remained until the European occupation the nub of the Tiki races. From Hawaii the legends tell of the departure of the greatest migration of all which was to populate the New Zealand archipelago.

Across the immense expanse which separated the main groups there were many islands still populated by melanoid peoples. The anthropological example of the Paumotu races proves today that the mixed blood does not go back more than a thousand years. The same applied to Tahiti which, in view of its area, preserved until historical times certain cores of melanoid races who had taken refuge in the centre of the island, now still inhabited by the descendants of the men of Tiki. Recent excavations carried out in the centre of the island and collections of their legends are a proof of this. I met an old Tahitian from the Pāpara district who told me that his grandfather used to speak of black men who sometimes tried at night to raid the beach in search of a little salt water which they took away in enormous bamboo containers.

This slow populating of the host of islands in the Eastern Pacific was thus carried out down the centuries, modifying



at the same time the primaeval character of the Tiki groups, separated from each other and once more assimilated by the autochthonous populations, themselves differentiated by generations of isolation. Only very much later, when this process of populating of the main groups was finished, did the isolated groups seek to reform. This is how the knowledge of the different archipelagos could be acquired and transmitted to certain initiated castes. I am thinking of the astonishing example of Captain Cook, who, when embarking at Tahiti, took on board a native pilot who was capable of giving him an almost complete map of the island groups of the Eastern Pacific.

Thus once a year the canoes setting their course by the stars as some of the island schooners still do today, reunited for the grand ceremony which took place on the Marae Opoa at Raiatea. But what surprised me most was what I managed to discover in the islands of Hiva Oa and Fatu Hiva. It retraced the history of the men in the canoes who once a year left on the immense voyage to Rarotonga, more than a thousand miles south-west, to find certain red feathers unique to that island and used in making the vestments of the deified priests. A voyage as long as this proves once more the perfect knowledge these races possessed of navigation by the stars. We must now consider how they survived at sea with their paddles and pandanus sail voyages which sometimes took a hundred days. When the islands were originally peopled, the inhabitants possessed a very restricted diet of vegetables and almost non-existent fauna, with the exception of a few sea birds.

On the arrival of the Europeans the islands, which had no snakes and very few insects, possessed only chickens and pigs brought by the melanoids. All the other species which we meet today in the islands were introduced by the first discoverers. For centuries the main diet of the Tikis was bread fruit and fish of all kinds. It is still their basic food



## THE WORLD'S OLDEST MIGRATIONS

today. The most noteworthy importation by the Tiki men was the Amazonian sweet potato which still preserves its name, kumara. By following the life of the sailors of certain isolated islands we can still reconstruct that first voyage of the rafts on which natives had to sail day after day living on fish and bananas—these provisions would not in any case last for more than a month—sweet potatoes, perhaps a few pigs and chickens, but above all rats, the only beast which can survive for a long time in these conditions. The latter were imprisoned in small bamboo cages which could be left exposed to the sea and bad weather. But the two main articles of diet were the coconut and the fish.

The coconut, with its tough rind, could resist the corrosive action of salt water for more than three months. Not only did it provide excellent fresh food but also a great essential drink. It must be remembered that the contents of a coconut correspond to about half a pint of water. In addition to this they recovered rain water. That these primæval migrations were impossible for lack of water can thus be ruled out. A certain quantity of liquid was available from the bread fruit and the raw fish. This is a fact proved daily by the diet of the men of Tiki. The basis remains raw fish.

Here I must point out that cancer and poliomyelitis were unknown in the islands until quite recently. The import of tinned meat, white bread, and spirits swiftly upset the dietary balance of these races. Before their priestly castes were rooted out they knew the energy-giving secrets of silica and their diet was balanced by the rigid rules of tabu which conformed to the lunar cycles of vegetation. Let me explain myself. We must not forget that certain vegetables become poisonous by the rise of their sap at periods of full moon. All that has been forgotten. The famous fish on Friday imposed by our religion is a mere token when one thinks of the exact science used by these peoples in their cycle of food. I remem-

ber the words of an Indian chief: "You civilised men do not kill, you assassinate slowly."

Thus the isles flourished, the double outrigger canoes laid their wakes all over the vast realm of islands, exchanging from island to island vegetables and animals suitable for life propagating throughout the Pacific the staff of life—the bread fruit. A deep study of the distribution and the unique techniques for harvesting the bread fruit give us a clue to the history of the population of the islands. The method exists nowhere else. Its presence has actually been confirmed in the Caribbean Islands, but it was the notorious Captain Bligh of the *Bounty* who brought it there on the orders of the king of England who had hoped for a free and abundant nourishment for his black slaves. This is only an example.

A legend giving precise details of the departure of the canoes from "Holy Raiatea" to New Zealand gives us exact details on the provisions carried by the Tiki sailors. "They carried in a canoe, for later sowing, sweet potatoes of the kind known as Kekaukau, fruit kernels of the karaka tree and in addition enclosed in cages a few live rats which were good to eat and a few tame parrots. They added a few large water hens and other precious objects." A rather extraordinary fact, which I learned personally, points to the truth of this story. On the island of Hiva Oa I had heard mentioned by an old Norwegian sailor and a few natives the existence of a strange animal called koau, not unlike a kiwi. According to the sailor he had chased it on horseback but had not managed to catch it on account of its speed. The creature was the size of a cock. Its plumage was violet, a yellow beak and its claws long and powerful. It had only embryo wings.

The description seemed to me so extravagant that I did not pay much attention until one day in a New Zealand Review with photographs to support it (this allowed me to show them to the natives) I came across the report of a dis-



Tortoiseshell engraved with a shark's tooth, representing one of the seven phases of the creation of the universe by Tiki (one of the seven plaques of the paekea)

covery by a mountain expedition of an unknown group of Noctunis found at the edge of a glacier. The bird was the same. The important point of course is that since it could not fly it could only have been transported by these nomads in their canoes—unless of course the famous continent of Lemuria really existed in this part of the Pacific. But this is a mystery I do not wish to embark upon although it is very disturbing, particularly in view of the recent submarine researches carried out in these waters.

For the reader who is thrilled by this theory I will merely say it is possible that Plato's famous Atlantis, if one follows his measurements, could be the continent of Lemuria, the importance of which has been perceived in the light of the latest American researches. The disappearance of this continent might have been due to the shock of an enormous fragment of the globe breaking off causing the shifting of the poles with the resultant ice ages. Numerous legends speak of an enormous meteorite which fell upon the Pacific and created Fatu Hiva.

## CHAPTER 19

### *Seven Valleys to Ouia*

OUR pet piglets lay on our sleeping bags. We kept them warm and were delighted with them. On the strip of wood on which I marked the days, the notch told me that the next day was Christmas Eve. In the olden days here 25th December was the great feast of the dying sun, the great assembly day of those whom we call pagans.

We lay awake, contemplating the sky of stardust and smoking our cigarettes as we listened to the snoring of our little wild pigs. But before dawn the storyteller, with his eyes closed, would repeat the genealogy back to the dawn of memory—the family tree which the Tahuas knew by heart and with their heart, teaching it to the men of the archipelago. This went back for over fifty generations ending with Hautete who was childless.

These men who for centuries and centuries had breathed the wind and the perfume of the tiare, who for centuries and centuries followed the teaching of those who considered human life as just a passage in the circle of return to Atum, unity . . . these men-gods were to die of the atrocious contagion brought by poxed sailors, sailors brutalised by alcohol and pride, who could only give the women of the island who offered them sweet honeymoons their diseases, their defects and their vices. Men whom the history of nations call heroes were men whom I call criminals.

On this eve of Christmas I dwelt on these sad thoughts. A hundred thousand witnesses of the Tiki before the arrival

of Mendoza's ships. Two thousand six hundred survivors in 1924 when Dr. Rollin tried to save them. Fifty-five genealogies of chiefs, retracing the life of the archipelago—fifty-five genealogies transmitted faithfully from mouth to mouth continuing until the end of the eighteenth century, dating for ever the arrival of the first death-dealing discoverers.

It is very difficult to establish an exact chronology for we cannot know precisely, on account of the principle of adoption, whether or not this genealogy missed a few generations. If we accept the principle that it is truly the eldest son who is named, we can then take each entry to cover a period of between fifteen to thirty years. By adopting, for example, the figure twenty, we can take it that the oral genealogy goes back more than 1,100 years. We can also envisage a less rational form in the case when the names transmitted were only those of the chiefs. This would be quite plausible and allow a completely different time factor.

One thing is extremely curious in the enumeration of the names. Whereas in the genealogy of the islands of the northern group each one begins with the god Atea, here he does not appear until the ninth generation while the first eight have a very special phonetic ring. This makes me think that this human genealogy represents a list of the deified chiefs. Atea (the day) was in the beginning. He received as wife Atanua (ugly image), she who could no longer be goddess and who presented him with the child Teponuiatea (Atea's great night). Atanua created to recreate life who could rule on the earth since she was the earth. The men of the Tiki archipelago like the Egyptians and the peoples of Amazonia always respected women and would accept them as chieftainess. There was then a very clear distinction between the sacred and the incarnated.

From this day marriage between brothers and sisters was tabu, for during his terrestrial passage the son of man was

## SEVEN VALLEYS TO OUIA

to lose this blood of the god, to incarnate himself, to create his earthly body, guarding his triplicity alone in memory of his origin in order to rediscover as his body decayed the true vision of his return. All notion of incarnation was the property of the woman who symbolised the presence of a god incarnated to create life.

Tiki, the creator of art, only appears at the twenty-third name. He married Kahuone (cloak of sand), but oddly enough the genealogy says that he was not created but had ancestors. Tiki the sun, the guardian spirit, the creator. At the thirty-eighth generation appears Nuku, war. This is a very important fact because from this god onwards calamities appeared. And at the fortieth generation we see figuring the names of tribes, Moota and Tiu, which have now disappeared. They existed, however, until the end of the nineteenth century. There is the immigration of certain human groups and separation. And the genealogy ends with Hautete, the fever; the blood of man having been tainted by disease, he no longer had the right to give life.

The people of the Tiki then chose the most dramatic testament to their gods . . . "to have no more children," and within a few years the population of 100,000 declined to 3,000. Faced with the tragedy of syphilis and the contagious diseases which ravaged the islands, certain valleys had the incredible courage to choose collective abortion. It would have been better to have allowed this race to die out in dignity than to redeem it suddenly and too late by enforced vaccination. Hardly had they been revived from their slow death than the men of Tiki were subjected in 1957 to the first results of the atomic experiments on Christmas Island, the nearest to the archipelago.

\* \* \*

The starry sky was outlined like a chart strewn with light-houses, fringed with moving continents of clouds. From



time to time we heard the dull sound of a blow hole exhaling the swell. Before dawn on Christmas Eve we left the base camp for I wanted at all costs to reach the famous lava needle where Tahua Eke might possibly rest.

We had to descend into the valley clutching on to lianas, advancing blindly under the shadow of the needles which loomed sheer out of the forest. On each side of the hillock were the narrow valleys we intended to explore. Alas, we could no longer do so in the time available. To the wall of the needle clung a huge banyan where, according to Keakea, the mummified body of Tahua Eke was suspended. It was an enormous tree and we should have to clear it thoroughly. At our first attempt Pau and I rummaged among the roots and discovered only a few fragments of bone. Where were the trappings? Probably hidden in some cleft of the rock, for I knew that the natives hid them twenty years ago when one of the French Residents announced his intention of pillaging the east coast. But the most serious loss was the famous mantle of red feathers which apparently covered his corpse—the royal mantle worn by priests of the sun from the pyramids of the Andes to the promontories of the Tiki Archipelago. There are only two examples of this vestment in the whole world.

It was quite certain that I should discover nothing for this wonderful feather cloak would have rapidly been eaten by vermin. That was half a century ago. I left the spot. Sometimes it is a good thing to leave secrets intact. But I must point out that great research work could still be carried out at the foot of this hillock. We returned to camp.

The following day dawned bright with excitement as we set out to explore the valley of Hana Mohe. The sun began to light up the depths of the valley just as we reached the ridge. Imagine our surprise to see not far from the pebbled beach the smoke of a camp. We scrambled down. The dogs had already betrayed our presence and when we came out of



the mango grove we met three men, one of whom was Kumati. Although they told us that they had come to try and capture a few wild pigs, I did not believe them. I think they had come to find out from Pau what I had discovered. We joined camps and went off with them on a day's hunting.

As I followed I was struck by the number of buildings still existing in the valley, but I found very few traces of tombs. Hana Mohe seems to have been one of the largest inhabited valleys on the east coast. A particularly striking feature was the width of the river bed which cleft the valley and had brought it life. Here too, since the deforestation of the island, everything has dried up. Now there is not a trace of water in the bed where the eroded stones show that once the waters flowed. A few sickly-looking orange trees grew among the paepae bringing a little light into the dark forest. Strangely enough the stone roads round the houses were clear of undergrowth as though the valley were still inhabited. This was the work of the wild pigs, the tracks of which were visible. They are the only living creatures now in this abandoned kingdom. They forage round the foundation stones in search of a few tau and mei roots, the last vestiges of the cultivated terraces which separated the villages.

A sharp report rang out. The men had hit a wild pig and the terrified young ones fled. Their cries mingled with those of the pursuers. Suddenly two little pigs rushed under my feet. I was not quick enough to catch them and Pau who ran after them shouted: "You're a clumsy idiot!" Carrying on with our hunt we gradually arrived at the end of the valley where in the forest itself towers an enormous koika surmounted by a fine meae. Unfortunately the site has been ruined by the banyans and wild palms. Vast sections of the wall have collapsed. The meae itself was nearly intact and we were able to find three fine red tiles entirely carved with Tikis.

Night fell swiftly beneath a sweeping mantle of storm

clouds. On our return to the camp we had a marvellous meal of venison during which the men swapped stories of the day's hunting. I heard them talking late into the night. Although I knew they were questioning Pau, I also knew that old Kea Kea had sent them to find out if the white man had discovered the sacred grotto. Next day they would leave for Omoa and we should once more be on our own in the valleys.

At dawn we held a palaver before the canoe left. I decided that since we were short of provisions and rather weary we would return to Ouia for New Year's Day, because Pau wanted to see his children.

It was my ambition to cross the island via the valley of Ouia. We would try and reach it by climbing the seven lines of crests which separated us from its comb. If we succeeded we should arrive exhausted and have no strength to attack the climb of the immense valley I had noticed a few months before. Two teams had to be notified: One to meet us in the Bay of Ouia and another to bring the horses to the pass. We fixed our meeting for New Year's Eve.

As soon as the canoe had disappeared round the point, Pau and I continued our exploration of the valley. I wanted first to number the paepae, take photographs of the carved flagstones, and make an excursion to the source of the river which was now dried up. The whole morning Pau left me in peace to carry out my work but I felt that he had changed. As soon as I had taken my bearings we left to explore the spring. The further we advanced the more the valley narrowed in the direction of the Hanateone valley. Huge corridors of lava covered with scree took me well above the forest. We came out at the foot of a tall cliff where the valley comes to an end in huge vertical corridors. In the old days the waters flowed down from here towards the centre of the island. On the walls the vegetation was still very dense. The sun could not penetrate between the

colossal walls except for a few minutes each day. The view of the crater was majestic.

I carefully examined the walls and could not see any excavations. We descended slowly towards the bay. I felt that Pau wanted to say something but he remained silent. On our way we caught sight of a herd of goats ambling towards the tiny ridge which separates Hana Mohe from Hanateone. We decided to steal up on them from behind and to chase them on to the cliff which falls into the sea. In twenty minutes we had reached the ridge and hiding behind rocks we could approach to within sixty yards of the herd which was upwind and could not yet smell us. It was a wonderful sight to see the herd outlined against the setting sun on the top of the crest. Some yards away an enormous he-goat kept watch on a rock. He suddenly appeared to have scented us.

As Pau fired the herd scattered on all sides among the precipices. I saw Pau disappear, sliding down the scree, forcing the animals to commit suicide. With almost human cries I saw four goats somersaulting on their dive down to the waves. From all sides avalanches of stones came loose as the animals fled. I rejoined Pau at the foot of the cliff where he had just cut up a splendid beast on the rock. All around him the sharks pounced on the offal he flung into the sea. Now we should have provisions for two days. This was providential for we had nothing left except a little tea and sugar. While a leg of goat was grilling slowly on the stones, we bathed in the sea. There was not a drop of fresh water in the whole valley but we only had to climb and pick a few coconuts to drink the milk.

We had a most satisfying meal under a cloudy sky, lit fitfully by the new moon. Smoking a last cigarette, we dozed by the light of the fire, to the accompaniment of murmuring palms, and petting our little pigs. Pau said quite simply:

"Tomorrow I will take you to see the cave with the many canoes." A moment later he was sleeping peacefully.

I awoke before dawn and prepared the fire, while Pau still slept. We did not leave until seven o'clock, for Pau said the sun would not light up the cave before it crossed the crests. Once more we climbed the valley which opened in all its grandeur as the morning sun filtered through the dewy ferns.

We climbed the lava flow, which was like the back of a mastadon, covered with the tentacle-like roots of stunted mape. Just before the valley entered the narrow ravine, Pau turned off to the right in the direction of a vast, staggered escarpment, though I could see nothing. The lava rose sheer up the cliff, revealing a comb filled with tree ferns. Suddenly like a bridge the lava joined the centre of the cliff affording us a passage. Pau told me to wait.

He leaped into the vegetation covering the wall and began to clear it with his machete. For more than half an hour I could hear him looking for a way through the wall. When he called I met him on the first escarpment which was covered with a dense variety of dried reeds he was cutting down with his machete. We were now on the cliff and could make out huge masses of reddish and violet lava towards which Pau pointed. But I could still see nothing. We began the vertical climb up the cliff but we had to check every handhold for the lava was very friable.

In this way we arrived at a flow of trachyte which scarred the lava obliquely. The going became very difficult for we had to hoist ourselves up on to a rather large rock jutting out of the cliff which falls sheer into the valley below.

"Tera!" That is it!

Suddenly, hoisting myself up on the rock, I noticed a huge shelter containing coffins. It was an incredible sight. The white coffins tangled with bones were outlined by the sun against a background of basalt rocks mingled with deep

orange and grey-blue lava outflows. We lowered a rope to secure ourselves for the grotto opening was a few feet below us. I saw that Pau was deeply moved. He was afraid for me because it had been said that the first white man to enter this grotto would be precipitated into the void. I wanted to lead the way but Pau refused. We advanced with extreme caution. In addition to the difficulty of climbing one must always be very cautious in the case of such a discovery, for excitement can prove a terrible danger.

As soon as the cord was secured we climbed down and set foot on the edge of the cave. The midday sun, caressing the cliffs, outlined the ivory of skeletons against an alcove of violet lava. Here, to the music of the wind and the birds, rest those who refused to believe that a governor could ever replace their king . . . those who believed in the divinity of the dream and would awake on their journey to the dawn. It was here that I felt most ashamed of having the same skin as those who civilised people by making wooden crosses like the one under which my brother rests in Indo-China for no purpose, perhaps so that I alone should learn to harbour some regret. . . .

On the ceiling of the grotto, hanging by cords of plaited coconut, swathed in squares of white tapa, slowly spun the revered skulls of those who remain looking at the sky. We stood balanced on the edge of the lava hardly able to move, so full of coffins was the shelter. Each of the canoes contained at least seven skeletons, some of which still bore traces of mummification. I could only look for I had decided to touch nothing. Clinging to the wall I tried to film this last testament. Against one of the coffins I could see a marvellous sculptured bowl containing a skull. It was an extraordinary object and I know no example to equal it in any museum in the world. Above all I could appreciate the admirable handles in the shape of Tiki heads.

I could also see a carved tortoiseshell crown near a frag-

ment of a red tern feather headdress, a rare crown if one remembers that the phaeton has only one single red feather in its tail and that at least fifty of these birds would have been necessary to make such an ornament. Had I been able to raise the tapa mattress I should probably have found a number of objects intact. A few strips of embalmed skin and hair still cling to one of the skulls. The floor of the cave was covered with a thick layer of guano for the phaeons rest here at night, waiting for the sun. This bird seems to be sacred to the sky for it never rests on land but always in the cliffs. Its astonishing whiteness and beauty seemed to have been predestined. This is perhaps why the men of the Tiki sometimes portrayed it as the image of their god (like our dove of the Holy Ghost). It is probably the only case in which these men allowed themselves to portray their god in the effigy of a living creature. Like all primitive peoples, they would never have had the pretension of representing God in the image of man. Their God being the perfect trinity, they could only symbolise him and them only in the most abstract graphism, leaving the rest to imagination.

Many people have asked me: "Why did you not keep these objects?" My profession as an archaeologist entails handling ancient remains but at the same time has made me realise the danger of stealing sacred objects. There is no really sacred object stolen under these conditions which has not greatly affected the man who stole it. Without mentioning the objects found in Tutankhamen's tomb which caused the dramatic death of each of the thieves, I can quote cases of German vandals burning and pillaging cathedrals or more recently Spanish Communists who, as they fled, carried off chalices and crucifixes to sell them.

It is certain that every object becomes sacred, irrespective of the religion, to the extent that hundreds of individuals meditate before it, subconsciously discharge the psychic waves of their concentration. The object becomes loaded with this

influence, as I can confirm from my own personal experiences. Moreover, the majority of sacred objects are made of receptive matter, such as volcanic stone, copper, bronze, gold or wood cut at full moon. Laden with the influence, they retain a force against which the ignorant can do nothing.

Let the reader be sceptical. He is entitled to be. I only know from experience and the teachings of certain adepts from Africa and Amazonia. It is precisely for this reason that I was successful in the Tiki archipelago while seven missions which set out before mine were unable to acquire any valuable information, having had only access to a few visible documents within reach of vandalism. I can relate that, as elsewhere in the archipelago there was a mixture of melanoid skulls and those known as caucasoid. What use would it have been for me to disturb these coffins? The photos were sufficient documentation for this first contact.

Some phaetons flying over the grotto watched us, deafening us with their cries.

I was the first to climb back, setting off a little landslide of stones. Pau followed.

After a last glance over the vault of lava which gleamed like an amethyst dome, studded with white quartz, we made our way back to camp through the forest, oppressive in its silence.



## CHAPTER 20

### *The Forest of Harps*

**L**EANING against the hut wall, we watched the sun's last rays on the pandanus roof. Softly Pau began to sing the song that heralds the night.

The moon rises over Omoa  
And the dew descends in the valley of Taiu  
The moon shines  
How brightly it shines!  
And the dew-laden white lilies shine in her gleam.  
You, O stranger,  
You who do not know us  
You will remember the scent of the tiare  
And you will remember it because you love it . . .  
The moon rises over Omoa.

The next day, with nothing to eat and too many pictures in our memory, we decided it was time to leave the sleepy silence of the valley. Shouldering our equipment, we began to climb the first slopes on our long journey to the escarpments of the east coast. By the following day perhaps, with forced marches, we could reach the haven of Ouia. We passed our old camps one by one and on each line of crests we stopped to take a last look at the majesty of these bays, where sometimes we could see the dolphins playing. We crossed Hanaoua and its sister valley and attacked the giddy line of crests which bars the passage to the last valleys before Ouia.



At the top of the cliff which forms a narrow raised plateau climbing towards the Pass of Desire, we discovered an impressive valley overgrown with luxuriant vegetation. Since we should have had to use our machetes and we were exhausted, we decided to sleep under the ironwood trees. That night when the breeze beat down on the plateau, I learned why the song of the ironwood trees was one of the three sacred noises for the Tiki priests. In the calm of the night the forest of ironwood trees is transformed by the wind into a symphony of Aeolian harps which chant like a little girl's lullaby. Through the slender branches of the trees which fall rather like those of a weeping willow, the wind glides, bending the twigs into a bow, twanging them, twisting, pulling and playing on the sleep-walking keyboard of the somnolent forest. When the men of Tiki heard the song of the ironwood they fell silent because it was the words of their god.

As I heard it I realised that it was so enchanting that I could understand the silence, and I understood why in the old days they planted these trees only on the crests surrounding their kingdom. It was the most beautiful of all night music. We slumbered on a mattress of needles like those from our pine trees.

Dawn broke, lighting up the still dark horizon of the ocean. It seemed to grow transparent and then with extreme gentleness its caressing fingers stroked the swell. We could hear the song of the wild cocks replying to the barking of errant dogs. Shivering with cold we warmed ourselves by the exercise of sharpening our machetes on the stones and shared our last cigarettes. At our side our funny little pigs foraged in the soil. We tried to discover a passage but four times we had to turn back. There was only one solution: to forge ahead and cut a way through. I found myself back in Amazonia advancing yard by stumbling yard.

After several hours we arrived on a lava spur fringing a

narrow gully, through which meandered a spring. The going was appalling. We took such steep paths that our dogs did not dare to follow. We heard them whining, looking for a place which would allow them to join us. At last we leaped on to the first rocks of the river bed. We plunged straight into a reach where the water poured down in a cascade. It was marvellous. From the stream the valley was outlined against the sky like a canyon dotted with shadowy citadels. This corridor of lava enclosed a straggling forest of great density. Before attacking the wall, I decided that after a short rest we would descend the torrent and explore the valley. For more than an hour we scrambled among the rocks without being able to make out anything. The valley was very narrow. It was probably uninhabited and kept as a hunting ground. In any case I could not see any signs of paepae.

I should have liked to pitch a camp here for several days for it is one of the most marvellous valleys in the islands. An overpowering sensation of the unknown, of another world permeates this copse of lianas. It joins the central chain of the island at a 2,500 ft. fault where the walls are only ten feet apart. At the bottom a waterfall crashes from the summit, hollowing out a channel of polished marble in the lava flank. Pau decided that we must chance this passage if we wished to reach Ouia before nightfall.

Hardly had we come out of the forest corridor than we entered a huge jungle of mape which clutched desperately to the rocky magma leading to the foot of a huge lava tooth flanking the ridge. We had to climb a three hundred foot wall and this took us three hours. In the distance we could hear our dogs barking, trying to force their way through. It was difficult to find handholds, for the lava was very brittle. In one pitch my load got stuck and I was immobilised. I had only one resource, to cut the straps and try to free myself. Suddenly the load toppled into the void nearly

carrying me with it. I had to climb down to recover it, as apart from my working equipment it contained my Rolleiflex.

Gradually we heard a strange turmoil of bird cries, an unusual sound in the calm of the forest. Motu Manu, the the Isle of Birds! We could not see it. A little before mid-day we reached the last needle with its coronet of ironwood trees. The crest line, only a few yards wide here, opened on to a parallel valley. We decided to take a rest. The valley we were about to cross seemed far less difficult, for the forest had invaded it, making it easier to find handholds. Nevertheless the dense vegetation made us lose our way several times and we took two hours to cross it. At last we came out on a vast plateau of ferns and pandanus which rose in a gentle slope to the cliff above the sea.

The cries of the birds which we had heard grew louder each moment until, coming out on the crest, we discovered a little island above which thousands of terns were flying. It was a piece of broken-off cliff which a few cables away blocked the entrance of two parallel valleys forming between them a handle of white sand which had been taken over by the birds. We were twelve hundred feet above the island with a fine view of the terraced shallows beneath the water. According to Pau, a man and a woman exiled by the Ouia tribe lived there, in the olden days, in this realm of birds. Around us on the yellow scree spurs we caught sight of large herds of white goats.

Leaning against a boulder overlooking the void I filmed this passage which has recaptured for me on celluloid for ever the peace of the South Seas.

We had to leave . . .

The plateau rose to a crest on which we could see outlined the lips of a crater. We entered vast forests of to and miro, trees which in the old days covered these islands and which, alas, have almost disappeared with the drought. They were trees that seemed to have been created to suit the rocks in

which they sought every drop of moisture. The to wood was very much sought after by the builders of schooners. It is in fact a precious wood, extremely hard; when cut it looks like a beautiful veined marble. From its largest trunks the men of the Tiki carved their finest kokas.

Thanks to the breeze blowing over the plateau we could put on speed until we came to the edge of the Ouia coomb which opened at our feet like a huge crater. The line of the crests skirted this immense depression by some 1,500 feet. Its base suddenly narrowed into a ravine above the valley. To our left, crowned with clouds, like a twisted saw blade, Mount Mataha rose more than 1,800 feet above the sea. We could not risk a descent down the rock face and had to make our way to the end of the promontory which forms the bay. In this way we rounded the crater with a sheer drop into the sea on one side and on the other the grotesque sight of these huge lava piles around which the clouds crept.

The dogs had finally joined us on the plateau. Although they were in a pitiful state, they wagged their tails and barked. Pau beckoned to me to put down my load and to follow them. Coming round a boulder we discovered a herd of goats which the dogs chased on to a boulder. As we had no cartridges left Pau decided to attack them with his machete. It revived for me the primitive hunt with a knife and a pike. Pau in his hunting fever encouraged the dogs to surround several goats on a small spur against which they had been forced back.

Inch by inch I saw them retreat. Some of them rounding on us managed to escape. All that remained was a he goat and two females which the dogs surrounded. The spur was only twelve feet. Huddled together the goats faced up to the dogs who no longer dared to advance. Pau approached with difficulty for the spur was separated from the cliff by a crevice over which the goats had leaped in a single bound. It was a long fight. Some of the dogs had already been

wounded and the goats were fighting for their lives. Suddenly one of the dogs leaped on to the spur and in terror two of the goats hurtled into the void. We heard the thud of their bodies far below in the forest. Now, on the spur, the dog and one goat were waging a furious combat. At this moment Pau leaped across the crevasse and stabbed the beast. I was furious that I had left my camera behind. Pau like a Hercules seized the beast and flung it on to a rock and proceeded to dismember it. I had difficulty in restraining the starving dogs. We decided to take a thigh each and to leave the rest to them. The dogs rushed madly on their prey. They could catch us up at their leisure.

Reshouldering our loads we began our descent towards the bay below. The sunlight penetrated the swell turning the bay into a precious emerald with a diamond necklace of foam set in a jewel case of purple lava. Pau soon spotted a trail which the hunters must have used in the old days and our descent was rapid. We were suddenly halted by a shot. We listened and a few seconds later another shot told us that the men from Omoa had arrived and spotted us. When we finally reached the beach we found three men, two of whom were my friends, Tahuata and Fetu. They rushed upon us, took our bundles and roared with laughter. I must have looked a pretty sight with my long hair and beard. We had but one thought in our heads: to get back to camp and take a bathe in the river. A quarter of an hour later, leaping from rock to rock we came out on the pebbled beach where the rest of the team was waiting for us—three youths from Omoa and Fetu's wife.

Everything had been prepared for our return. The camp had been pitched and on a fire at the foot of a paepae the oven was already installed for our meal. A few moments later we were in the little stream which ends in a pocket at the edge of the pebbles. Our adventure on the east coast was over. Reflected against a background of spangled black

sand, the bay was still glittering in the bright sunlight. From time to time a cloud of foam leaped across the bar of black pebbles which broke the waves. Frigate birds flew over the river waiting for a favourable moment to dive and in full flight to snap up a few drops of fresh water.

Slowly the setting sun plucked the last gleams from the tops of the palms. Near the cliff the acrid smoke of the fire rose heavily laden with the smell of wild pig which the men were roasting on the lava. Lying on the warm sand at the water's edge, I watched the prawns speeding among the rocks or the little natos imprisoned by the basin.

It was the blue hour, Gauguin's moment when the great painter found the most beautiful colours in the world which the sun deposits on the Tiki beaches. The sun retired into the cavern of the valley taking with it the breeze, casting a last glance on the flight of the albatrosses giving their love cries, heralding the moon which would reveal them perching on the rocky crags. Fetu motioned me to hide behind some dried palms which the men had planted in the middle of the basin to be out of sight of the birds. A few minutes later I saw them in their hosts sailing over the water and in file like falling stones, snapping up a few drops of water and flying into the air again. The grace of their flight enhanced their strange nobility.

Sometimes the men hidden behind these palms knock them out of the sky with stones. I thought of these birds who arrive here exhausted after their long flights over the sea coming to rest on the glittering water. Night stole into the valley with the first glow of the oven fire. Hamai kaikai! Come and eat! The big wooden koko had been laid on the stone floor and everyone chose his seat for the meal.

One by one the men came down to the river to take their last bath hiding behind the hibiscus. Beneath the porch of the hut calm reigned like the smoke of a hearth laden with the first dew. It was a great joy to be together again, to

exchange gossip and above all to listen. Pau and I were ravenous. Popoi, kaaku, water cress, roast pig, fish, mangoes, oranges and bananas—a royal feast served on banana leaves. Hardly was the meal over than the remains were thrown to the waiting dogs while tobacco was passed from hand to hand. In the old days the men smoked fabulous pipes carved from cachalot teeth. Now that these have disappeared they roll their cigarettes like European peasants.

Pau now led the conversation and told of my adventures, my special trick of upsetting the fire and putting it out, my speciality of suddenly making a noise just as the game was in sight, and my extraordinary skill in stumbling and bringing down a shower of scree.

*Popaa aita Maitai!* White man no good! It is obvious that I was only the king of the acrobats and I shared in the general hilarity.

A few guests swept the valley announcing the storm, so we took refuge in the hut where the little lights had already been lit. Huddling against the walls, wrapped in our cotton blankets, we waited for the storm. In each hut there was a friendly family atmosphere and then each one began to tell a story . . .



## CHAPTER 21

### *Farewell*

THERE was once (said the storyteller) a young man and a young woman who were farmers. . . . One day a pig began to court the young woman and she became pregnant. A few months later a child was born.

The pig took it away to a cave and, for fear that the baby boy might escape, sealed up the entrance. When the boy was twelve, the pig made a hole in the cave entrance so that the sun could enter. And at last the boy said: "Father, I want to take a wife."

The pig whistled for his brother, the sun pig, who asked what was the matter. And the boy's father said: "Our son now wants a wife and I want you to lead him to that wife." Then the sun pig said to the young man: "Let us leave. We will go and meet a pig and in his nose we shall find the key which will open the door of the life you desire, the door to your wife's kingdom."

They found the pig asleep in his cavern. Softly the sun pig stroked the nose of the pig until he sneezed and the key fell out.

"Now go on ahead of me," said the sun pig to the boy, "and you will come to a big tree covered with moss. Part the moss on the trunk and you will find a hole and the key will open it for you."

The young man found the magic tree, parted the moss and saw the hole. He turned the key, the tree opened and he discovered seven girls belonging to a lizard. The young man



was unhappy because he knew that the lizard would kill him if he took the women. Then the sun pig said to the lizard. "If you want to chase the young man away make a rain storm and pour water on him so that he will be carried away by the stream." The lizard then conjured up the rain and the water flowed so violently that it spurted up to the sky.

The young man was so afraid that with the sun pig he ran back to the shelter of his father's grotto. The water gradually subsided and the sun pig said to him: "Let us go back again." When the lizard saw the two men he was so surprised that he lit an enormous fire to chase them away and the young man once more took refuge in the grotto.

Seeing the fire go out the sun pig said to the young man: "Let us go back quickly where we were before." And the lizard seeing them once more in the same place said, "I am vanquished for I have no other way of chasing you away."

Then the young man ran to see his father and asked him what he should do and his father replied. "Take these three bows and three arrows and kill the lizard." The boy took the bow and strung it so taut that the twang of the first arrow echoed to the paternal cave and the pig cried: "Ah, how strong my son is." And the noise of the second was even louder and the echo rumbled through the mountains. And the third arrow implanted itself in the lizard's forehead and the blood flowed as far as the grotto.

And the father on seeing this said: "The lizard is dead." Then the young man set out to find the young women but they had fled and he could not find them. In despair he ran to ask his father's advice. "The girls are in the garden." In great excitement the young man rushed into the garden and among the flowers discovered the seven girls. They were so beautiful that he could not stop looking at them.

Then he asked for the hand of one of them and her name was Te Papa Tahera. But the six other girls did not want him to carry off Te Papa Tahera because it would make

them sad. Seeing that the young man desired Te Papa Tahera so much, all the other girls began to resemble her and the young man did not know which was which. So he returned to his father for advice.

"Go and take the middle one," said the pig. The boy returned to the garden and said: "I want the girl in the middle."

But during his absence all the women had changed places and Te Papa Tahera was at one end of the line. They were all wearing the same dress, but the young man loved Te Papa Tahera so much that he managed to recognise her. On seeing this the other girls were at a loss and said to him: "Te Papa Tahera is yours but now you must find a flower on which the bees have settled and bring it back to your wife."

The young man set out and looked everywhere in the garden for the flower with the bees. At last he found it but it was not very pretty. He picked it and took it back to the six girls. And his father said to him: "Put the flower carefully in a little packet of leaves and hang it round your neck." The young man then went off to find his wife who said to him: "Be careful. If the flower falls and someone should pick it up, I should fall in love with that person." And the young man kept the flower carefully hung round his neck.

One day his father came to fetch him and together they paid a visit to the pig from whom they had stolen the key. While they were talking the little packet fell at the feet of the pig without the young man noticing it. On their return to the cave that evening the father asked his son: "Where is your packet?" And the young man noticed that he had lost it and was very sad. And his father said. "Go and look for it everywhere and if you see someone wearing it round his neck, take it without asking his permission."

The young man sought everywhere and finally returned

## FAREWELL

to the cave of the pig from whom he had stolen the key. He leaped forward, seized the flower and ran back to his father's cave.

The pig pursued the boy and his father but soon lost track of them. And then the father and son returned to their grotto and prepared a great feast for the marriage. And that day his father discarded his pig's disguise and was more handsome than the son.

And that is the end of the story, a favourite in the homes of the Tiki people.

\*     \*     \*

I waited for days to be able to film the sunrise over the bay and we gathered at the river regularly for the morning bath, returning to the fire where the coffee was being heated.

The hut we had been given for our last few days was carefully swept and tidied. When I looked at it I saw that the storms had already been at work on it. It had been the home of the last couple in the valley, who had died there ten years ago. The man, a Tahua, had watched the death of his valley which, in those days, had contained over a thousand inhabitants, as the tumbled-down paepae testified.

It was approaching the time for farewell. One by one, we entered the tunnel of vegetation through which the river meanders. Strangely enough it is drying up. It only reappears, I was told, near the spring at the end of the valley. Ten years ago, according to Tahuta, the water flowed throughout the valley. After half an hour's walk we reached the foot of the first hill which rises to the centre horseshoe mountain mass of the island. Hardly had we left the forest than the country opened ahead of us, immense and inhuman, too beautiful.

At the centre of the ridges which rise towards the pass, as though placed there by man, are two enormous joined

monoliths like a double statue from Easter island. Between them is a passage which serves as an observation post to spy out the pass. The twin monoliths stand directly in the path of the sun and yet I do not think that they were placed there by men. It took us nearly an hour to reach them. Travellers would always stop there for they are at equal distance from the foot of the valley and the 1,200 feet Ouia pass, a place where the wind blows through the dwarf ferns, refreshing man and giving him a superb view of the valley, the route for the men of Tiki crossing the island.

To the left towered an enormous cliff in which a landslide had gouged out a kind of huge shelter. According to the islanders this was the house of Tupa.

We continued on our way, skirting and following the crest which led under the cover of the mangoes to the foot of the crater where pandanus and half-buried lianas flourished. A tiny zigzag path in the cliff allowed us to climb swiftly and, after two hours' walking, to reach the pass which is only a tiny landslide in the lava crest that dominates the island. Here begins a vast plateau which stretches as far as the Omoa valley. In the lee of the crest the caravan dropped its load. This was another ancient resting place. Some made garlands of fern to use as fans. The sun is too beautiful to wear a colonial pith helmet.

In a few moments Fetu returned with two horses for Pau and myself. We would ride on ahead while the rest of the party would meet us before nightfall, at Omoa.

It was wonderful to have a horse again. Once more there was the joy of galloping over a plateau of ferns which crackled underfoot, while the pandanus leaves, with their long olive or orange trailers, lashed our faces as we passed. Made restless by the night they had spent near the pass, the horses seemed excited and we had great difficulty in curbing them on the difficult going. I shall never forget how regal Pau looked as he rode across the island, his broad smile

framed with flowering hair, adorned with straws. Together we came out on to the path of Hanavave. Halted abruptly in their course the horses reared, neighing loudly and putting up a flight of birds. The horses here are as wild as the men of the islands. They are never gelded.

The road now sloped to Omoa and we had to hold our horses back for the bare soil, soaked by a violent storm, made the going difficult. From time to time we passed through mango groves. The air was scented with their burst fruit, shaken to the ground by the storm. We had to allow the horses to eat some.

Behind the promontory Omoa opened like a book of another world. The mirror of the still sun-dappled sea was blotted out by violent stripes of rain. Pau smiled at me. It was wonderful to gallop in the storm, to see nothing ahead but a tousled mane, gleaming in the rain.

The horses put on a spurt, leaving deep imprints of their hooves in the soil. At that moment the sun broke through the veil of rain, brightening the valley with a host of rainbows. Under cover of the forest each leaf, each branch, seemed impregnated with quicksilver through the light mist. We reached the beach for our last gallop and our horses raced over it into the waves.

Willy! I leaped from my horse and we fell into each other's arms. We had no need for words. What a wonderful Christmas present.

"Well?" he asked.

"The most fabulous voyage one could imagine, Willy."

The sound of a mallet beating tapa and the cries of the children announcing to the village the return of the expedition echoed through the valley. The breath-taking beauty of the valley turning softly purple in the sunset. . . . An old man had died and two babies had been born since my departure. One by one the grown-ups and the children approached the shade of Willy's mango tree, greeting me softly.

## IN SEARCH OF TIKI

I went to see old Keakea who still cut his kokas in heavy miro woo ads in the old days. Leaning as always against the pole of his hut, the old man was patiently hacking an enormous billet of wood. I saw him from the distance, bent in his accustomed way, almost as though in meditation. As I approached I saw him struggle to his feet with the help of the pole and the handle of his chisel, swaying on his legs, swollen with elephantiasis to greet me. We did not need to speak. We squatted on the paepae looking at each other for a long time in silence, watching the first stars rise—until Pau came rushing up to announce that we should all celebrate the New Year in Willy's house. This would be an island Christmas Eve with the adopted children of Willy and his brother who had arrived by the last schooner. We should listen to the storyteller's marvellous tale until dawn had completed one more cycle of life.



The hours passed like a dream. Letters which the last schooner had brought me impelled me to return shortly to Bora Bora, though I still had a few days. We often tried to get news over the wireless of the movements of the schooners, but each set seemed to vie with the other in the unexpected. "In Berlin two plenipotentiaries on an extraordinary mission congratulated each other and left like rockets. . . ."

"In Arkansas a spinster of sixty-four maintained that she had been shamefully raped by two negroes and organised a lynching party with her friends after breakfast."

"A society of bachelor fathers has organised a demonstration in London."

We tuned in to Radio Tahiti, the voice of France. "At sixteen hours the *Benicia* coming from Bora Bora, Raiatea, Huanine has just entered the port of Papeete . . . Tomorrow

## FAREWELL

the *Vaitere* will leave Tahiti, destination the Marquesas . . . Tomorrow a clear sky with some cloud . . . Paris has just informed us by cable . . . The famous guide Lachenal has died a glorious death in the mountains . . . Radio Tahiti calling, the voice of France . . . Radio Tahiti sends its greetings to all the islands as far as Reas, to all those sailing on the seas, to all the sick, to all the lepers, to all parents and friends. . . . Greetings! Tahiti!"

Tahiti is really the finest radio station in the world!

I put the finishing touches to my work as I waited for the schooner. I shall try one day with the help of Willy and his brother to translate the legends which go back to the now deserted valleys. Each night found me on the beach trying to record the ancient admirable songs and the genealogies which the old men still repeat. This work turned out to be very difficult for I learned that during my absence the missionary had paid a visit to the island. On learning that his flock, interested in my work, had recited the old legends and had sung, he terrorised them by telling them that they were committing a mortal sin!

Nothing has really changed since the death of Paul Gauguin. He wrote nothing but the strict truth. He told the truth of the tragic problem of these much abused races. But each day the valley will go at nightfall to listen to the song which rises on the beach of Omoa. Each evening the youths will weave their garlands of ferns and the women their necklaces of tiare simply because they are beautiful, incredibly more beautiful . . .

Profiting by my last hours in the valley I learned by heart the teachings of old Kea Kea or the old woman who is the last to carve the Tiki alphabet on wood. I learned to love the smiles of the children to whom I hope this book bears testimony, so that whatever happens they will never forget that men like Alain Gerbault and Paul Gauguin were French.



## IN SEARCH OF TIKI

But——

to those who were responsible for the death of Gauguin, a single picture of whose could now finance the trial which is to start ;

to those who break the idols and having glued them together, set them up in their museums ;

to those weighed down beneath their decorations after authorising the massacre of the warriors who wore feathered head dresses ;

to those who stick vine leaves on ancient statues and wear indecent bikinis to hide the obscenity of their sagging bellies ;

to those who, like the Gendarme Clavière, could break Monsieur Gauguin's carved walking stick and say: "What is that filth?" ;

to those who oppose the name of Paul Gauguin, of whom an old woman of the island of Hiva Oa gave me one of the most moving funeral orations: "By dying Monsieur Gauguin for the first time in his life caused us grief" ;

To all those, I hurl this book.

\* \* \*

Tomorrow, perhaps this evening, the schooner will sway against the Omoa sky.

Tomorrow. . . . This evening . . . I shall set out again on the long pilgrimage of the islands.

It is over . . .

Finished . . . this book which was only a long evening spent with my brother, finished because it is no longer possible to write certain words which would only suffer the blue pencil of the censor.

\* \* \*

They are there, the people of the valley. They are there, the last witnesses. They were there and I could no longer see them, listening only to the songs that I loved.

*Tau tino ite repo !*







CIRCULATED

Hawain Is.

Johnston I.

Palmyra I.

Washington I.

Fanning I.

Christmas I.

Howland I.

Jarvis I.

Phoenix Is.

Malden I.

Ellice Is.

Tokelau Is.

Wallis I. Samoan Is.

Fiji Is.

Tonga Is.

Manihiki I.

Society Islands

900 miles

Tahiti

Cook Is.

TUBUAI Is.

Rapa Is.

Gambier Is.

TO-HIVA

TUAMOTU Is.

Kermadec Is.

NEW ZEALAND

P A C I F I C

O C E A N

EQUATOR

4,375 miles

Revilla Gigedo Is.

Clipperton I.

Panama

COLOMBIA

Galapagos Is.

PERU

Lima

osia I.

Santiago

"A book that is shut is but a block"

CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL LIBRARY

GOVT. OF INDIA  
Department of Archaeology  
NEW DELHI.

Please help us to keep the book  
clean and moving.

S. B. 148, N. DELHI.

E. G. M.